



(Photo Imperial War Museum.)

*The British Watch on the Rhine*

(Cologne Cathedral and Hohenzollern Bridge in background)

*Frontispiece*

# THE REVOLVER REPUBLIC

*FRANCE'S BID  
FOR THE RHINE*

BY

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WITH 25 PHOTOGRAPHS

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TO

MY MOTHER AND FATHER

WHOSE SENSE OF FAIR PLAY, UNIMPAIRED  
BY PERSONAL LOSS, ENCOURAGED ME TO TELL  
THIS STORY OF A BEATEN ENEMY'S STEADFAST  
ENDURANCE IN THE DARKEST HOUR



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# THE REVOLVER REPUBLIC

## CHAPTER I

### THE ARMS STAND STILL

ACROSS the map of Europe stretches like a jagged scar from north-west to south-east an ugly black line, continuous save for a break near Lake Constance. It is the line formed by the Rhine from mouth to source and by the Danube from source to mouth. It is the barometer of Europe's political weather, the thermometer of her political temperature. The statesmen, diplomats, politicians, soldiers, secret service men, agitators and dictators—the men, doctors or charlatans, who watch her political health, detect here the first signs of danger. It was so in the days of Julius Caesar and of Charlemagne. It was so through the Middle Ages, in 1914, and, despite the League of Nations, Locarno and the financial dependence of the smaller on the greater Powers, it is so to-day. These two great contiguous watercourses, along which I have spent the post-war decade, will always be to me the linked scars of Europe's latest wounds, in some places nearly healed, in others just closing, in others again open and almost festering. This book on the wound of the Rhine (Europe's wounds along the line of

the Danube will be dealt with in a sequel) is not a dogmatic treatise on healing. It is the case-book of a simple student, containing his notes of the progress and relapses of the patient, Europe, in so far as these have come under his personal notice and as he has observed the effect on her wounds of the efforts of the often quarrelling medicos to prove their particular theory the right one.

No two specialists have been more at variance than the partners in the late *Entente Cordiale*—Great Britain and France. The difference has been fundamental both as to aim and as to the essential character of the two races. For the exhausted German people the Armistice of November, 1918, meant precisely what their word for it implies. Like so many German words, it is as refreshing in its pristine literal simplicity after our figurative Latinisms as was a Greek testament to Oscar Wilde after the familiarity of the authorized version. "*Waffenstillstand!*" "Arms stand still!"—that, for the nation out of whom its rulers had squeezed the last ounce of patriotism, had produced the last nervous spasm, the last grain of endurance, was a sufficiently overwhelming conception to demand the full concentration of its utterly wearied faculties. What lay beyond was incomprehensible. Enough for the night that the arms stood still.

Not so for the victorious nations—especially for those two most immediately concerned, France and Great Britain. It is not often that one can detect such singleness of purpose moving both

the directors and the directed, the makers of opinion and those who are to be influenced, the governors and the governed—as was to be observed in France when the arms stood still in November, 1918. “*L’armistice*” meant for the people, the politicians, the diplomats and the soldiers but one thing—the extinction so far as was humanly—or inhumanly—possible of Germany as a Great Power. Great Britain presented no such united front to the problems which were born with the cessation of gunfire at 11 a.m. on 11th November, 1918. Certainly the masses of the civilian population, suffering from a bad rush of propaganda to the head, had ideas not dissimilar from those of the French. Perhaps in no belligerent country was the conception of the original, ineradicable sin of the enemy peoples more honestly, more thoroughly accepted by the masses.

I remember conversing from the window of a leave-train at Southampton in December, 1918, with a young English-speaking German doctor who was sitting at the window of a stationary train-load of prisoners for repatriation awaiting embarkation. He told me with what genuine amazement the British troops who had captured him and his comrades in 1917 watched them eating the bully-beef thrown to them in the “cage.”

“Look, Bill,” one Tommy had shouted in real astonishment, “’ere’s a lot of ’Uns what’s learned ter use forks.”

So effective had the “barbarous Hun” legend already become. But, however genuinely such things were believed in 1917, it would by 1922

have been impossible for anyone to hear in an English household the remark that a Viennese friend of mine heard in the home of his French connections. "*Petit bôche*" was still, four years after the war, the ugliest and most tear-producing name which the nursery-governess could apply to the small son of the house when he appeared at table with grubby hands—" *parce que les bôches ne se lavent jamais!*"

Behind the desire of the French masses to see Germany utterly destroyed as a power in Europe and her population diminished by every possible means was much natural fear, much of the purely human desire to "hit back" for ruined towns and ravaged countryside, but most of all a deadly personal enmity, of which the Latin peoples are capable, but which the Anglo-Saxon, save in rare moments of passionate cruelty, can neither understand nor share. Just as the Southern Latin is, like the Southern Slav, honestly incapable of understanding what objection there can be to carrying chicken upside down all day, leaving them tied by the feet in bunches in the scorching sun of the market-place, and gently kicking them when the torture of the baking *pavé* makes them flutter piteously, so his subjective concentration on his own interests, rights and wrongs makes it impossible for him to regard the typical Anglo-Saxon tendency to consider (if only fleetingly) "the other fellow's point of view" as anything but hypocrisy, stupidity, or treachery to friends.

Yet this illogical Anglo-Saxon tendency is as

genuine, as ineradicable a trait as that concentrated Latin hate of the enemy which deprives him of a claim to human consideration. While such cries as "Hang the Kaiser!" and "Squeeze Germany like a lemon until the pips squeak!" may have been—indeed, the results of the 1919 elections showed that they obviously were—inspiring appeals in England itself, it may be doubted whether they ever aroused much more than ironical acquiescence among the men at that front which for them had ceased to be a battle-front. There are many explanations of this, but the simplest seems the most convincing.

For four years and a half the greater part of the British nation which was incapable of bearing arms had been suffering at the hands of Germany. Leaving on one side the lesser physical discomforts of the "home-front," which were generally so cheerfully borne, there was the steady massacre of friends and relations—the fine torture of never-ending dread, by day and night, of that normally insignificant person transformed by war into a ghastly messenger of doom, into a grisly figure of death, in a peaked cap and buttons—the telegraph boy. And all this time the greater part of the nation had been helpless, unable to hit back. To read of the blows struck by the nation's armed forces was not enough; to consider the German mother's dread of the *Bote* with *his* telegram of doom was as impossible for the agonized British mother as for her to analyse the evidence of war guilt and to allot to "the Kaiser" his proper share—and to M. Poincaré,



M. Isvolsky and M. Sazonoff theirs. With the final collapse of the Central Powers in 1918, the human desire in Great Britain to punish the tormentors of the past four and a half years temporarily got the upper hand of reason.

It did so far less at the front. No abstruse psychological explanation for this need be sought. For four and a half years the man at the front, if his physical sufferings and his danger had been more acute, had at least been hitting back. For the last six months he had been doing little else but hit back at a perceptibly weakening and recoiling enemy. If Germans had been killing and maiming his comrades, he had been killing Germans—killing Germans—killing and maiming them in shoals. His blood-lust was being appeased, while that of the “home-front” was being suppressed, and developing in a “complex.”

It is safe to say that not 1 per cent. of the 200,000 British troops or of the 10,000 Americans who marched into Germany at the end of 1918, or of the other hundreds of thousands who followed in their wake, had any conception that the Allied Armies were to become for the next eleven years the instruments of French policy. For them it was not “*l'Armistice*” as the French conceived it—the disarming of the enemy in order to carry on relentlessly the campaign against him with the same objectives (the securing and consolidation of ever more territory) as those of the campaign in which he retained his arms and defended himself. For the men on the spot this was an armistice like any other in history—a cessation

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of warfare during which the two armies confronted one another while an endeavour was made to reach terms of peace. That the enemy had had to agree to allow the armies to stand on his territory during this period was a clear indication that those peace-terms were to be for us very favourable, for him very stiff, but not necessarily dictated terms.

We had talked and sung of the "march to Berlin"—but we had not accomplished it, and were glad to be spared the inevitable hardships and slaughter, the strain and the risk—for if his moral was broken, ours was strained—of such a campaign. The Armistice seemed to the man in the field a merciful compromise—we thought we sacrificed thereby the chance of dictating terms with our foot on the neck of the enemy and were satisfied that it was so. "Fritz" was beaten and must pay the loser's price; but he had asked for and been guaranteed quarter, not taken a straight knock-out blow. We expected his teeth to be drawn—we were eager to set aside those ferocious dentures which he had forced us to insert in our normally modestly equipped mouths. But we had no conception that we were to be required to assist in drawing those teeth of his in order that our ally might add them to her already formidable equipment. Very few can have thought of a ten years' occupation as within the bounds of possibility. Fewer still thought that it was to be utilized to serve that policy of dismembering Germany, which culminated in the establishment by France of

the "Revolver Republic" on the banks of the Rhine.

This, I believe, is a not unfair picture of the state of mind of those men who followed "Plum"—General Lord Plumer, commanding the British Army of the Rhine—and General Allen, the Commander-in-Chief of the American Forces on the Rhine, across the German frontier to the Rhine in December, 1918.

It was diametrically opposed to the spirit in which the French began the occupation. From the first the business of humiliating a brave but beaten enemy was repugnant to the Anglo-Saxons. I myself had been sent to the Armistice Commission at Spa, the late German General Headquarters in Belgium, immediately after that unforgettable advance through liberated Belgium, when I had been attached to the first line of cavalry to take over the surrendered dumps of war material and guns from the retreating Germans. The most painful memory to-day of my military career is of an incident when, believing such an attitude was necessary "to keep the *bôche* in his place," I ordered a thin, war-scarred German staff-captain attached to the Armistice Commission off the pavement and "told him off" for having failed to see and salute me, nominally his equal in rank but obviously immeasurably his junior, in the November dusk.

As an excuse I can only plead the emotional intoxication following that incredible advance through Belgium. As the first Allied soldier



(Photo Joski, Cologne.)

*Scottish Battalion entering Cologne*

to enter a number of villages and towns, I had been embraced, kissed, surreptitiously robbed of regimental buttons in the crowds and nearly of shoulder straps and badges of rank. Beneath the glare of oil-flares in the market-places I had sung with the crowds until I was hoarse "*La Brabançonne*" and, among the song-loving Walloons, a catchy jingle of triumph:—

"Belges indomptés,  
Frères alliés,  
Enfants de la victoire!  
O chers disparus,  
Vous êtes les élus  
D'une immortelle gloire."

I had even stood up in uniform and sung the only verse which I knew of the British National Anthem in a crowded Belgian drawing-room. Although for the best of all reasons (complete inability) I never sang in public before nor have I done so since, I then rendered eight encores of my only verse to satisfy the rapturous applause of an insatiably "*allié*" audience. I had deprecatingly drunk the last of their hidden bottles of wine. I had shamefacedly accepted some of their scanty rations of misnamed war "bread." I had been pushed to the front row of a happy crowd to haul into a brief eternity the straw-stuffed effigy of the All-Highest (and so fulfilled in advance the later-announced British peace aim of "hanging the Kaiser"). I had, in fact, had a real carouse of hate—but the quiet dignity of that German staff-officer (I should like to apologize to him if he is still alive) as he complied

with my legal but outrageous demand outside the Spa military cinema cured me.

Sanity returned to most of us almost as quickly. There were exceptions. Three days later I heard a gallant A.P.M. telling a dubious audience of subalterns at Düren Station of how he had struck the hats of twenty German civilians from their heads with his riding-crop because they had failed to uncover as they were ordered to do to every British officer. But the British troops had not then been five days in Germany. Five years later I was to see this pastime of knocking off German civilians' hats still capable of entertaining French troops throughout a long summer afternoon at Bochum.

At Düren, also, I had to interpret for a young subaltern to explain that the reason why the German working-man whom he wanted to arrest for not taking off his hat had failed in his duty was because he was blind. In general, British officers were so filled with detestation of this outrageous order which the French (in revenge for a similar, only slightly more justifiable war-time order of the Germans) insisted on the Allies issuing that they hid themselves in their quarters in Düren, venturing voluntarily on the streets only after dark, when the civilian population had to be indoors. Had I myself retained any appetite for this sort of thing, the mocking salutes of half a dozen schoolgirls who removed their tam-o'-shanters with sweeping curtsies as I passed them in a side street would have completed my cure.

The schoolgirls' method of treating this order

was more effective than that of General von Winterfeldt, which I heard very simply and neatly defeated at the Armistice Commission. Day after day the tall, spare Prussian, his back against the wall, confronted across the conference table the icy severity of the Allied delegates as he tried to save something for his country out of the wreckage left by the Armistice Convention. One morning, in his cold and passionless tones, he read a note of protest against a proclamation of the Belgians issued on their entry into Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). It imposed the penalty of death on civilians for all sorts of harmless actions, enjoining, among other things, that German civilians should uncover and yield the pavement to every Allied officer. Von Winterfeldt described this as going beyond the rights of any occupying army and resumed his seat, passing a copy of his protest to the French delegate, General Nudant. Before the wiry little Frenchman could reply, the Belgian delegate rose solemnly to his feet and recited in monotone:—

“The proclamation which General von Winterfeldt describes as one of unexampled severity is an exact reproduction of that issued by the German Higher Command on the occupation of Brussels in 1914.”

Neat and comprehensible, but, of course, not a complete justification for the methods of an invading army meeting with stubborn resistance being employed by an army occupying by agreement territory inhabited by a disarmed and cowed population.

It is difficult to-day to imagine British officers compelled for weeks on end to accept this distasteful tribute, but the insistence of the French and Belgians on this humiliation of the Germans made it inevitable.

Cologne was exempted. Dr. Adenauer, the Oberbürgermeister of Cologne, who played and is still playing a big part behind the scenes of German politics—the bigger in that he was canny enough to decline an invitation to become German Chancellor in the most troublous days because he could not get the support of the Socialists—succeeded in getting it abrogated. With Colonel F. G. Piggott, the General Staff Officer in charge of Intelligence for the Second Army, I called on Dr. Adenauer before our troops moved up.

“We do not ask a favour,” he said quietly, “but only that you should glance at the serried ranks of foot-passengers in the narrow Hohestrasse, and imagine the result of this order when your officers arrive. It will mean that the male population will without exception join the Hatless Brigade.”

He gained his point.

When I visited Cologne from Düren that day rough-looking guards of the “Workmen’s and Soldiers’ Councils” were lounging about with slung rifles protecting dumps of ammunition in the city squares. A few days before, German *Hausfrauen* engaged on the dreary, helpless daily quest for food had been astonished to see thousands of ragged and hungry-looking British Tommies wandering aimlessly down the high road, gazing dazedly at the unaccustomed picture of civilian



liberty. Mingled with them were thousands of ragged men and women in prison garb, or clad only in blankets. This general gaol delivery of criminal as well as military prisoners by order of the revolutionary sailors of Kiel was the first intimation to most of the population of Cologne that the war was over and revolution in full swing.

Our own visit to Cologne was made by invitation of the Oberbürgermeister; as a result, British troops actually entered the city before they were legally entitled to, on his urgent request that the occupation should not be delayed until looting and plundering had become general, as it had already in Berlin.

At that moment it looked as though Berlin, and after it all unoccupied Germany were foredoomed to Bolshevism. This gave the impulse to a temporary movement in Rhineland which was fuel to the flames of French Rhineland policy.

The Catholic Church, never satisfied to accept as final the results of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, or the swamping of the Rhenish Catholics in the masses of Protestant Prussia with whom they had been incorporated since the Congress of Vienna in 1815, found fresh cause to distrust Prussia now that Bolshevism seemed likely to sweep across it from the East. Rhenish Catholic citizens in general were, of course, no less loyal to the Reich than were any other Germans, but a fanatic few carried their religion into politics, and began to consider the advisability of cutting Rhineland adrift, not, of course, from the Reich, but from Prussia. Many well-to-do citizens were

alarmed lest, even if Bolshevism were averted, radical Socialist schemes for nationalization of property might threaten their well-being. The outcome of all these doubts and fears was the famous "Casino Conference" at Cologne, in which even that convinced but sober and cold-blooded patriot Dr. Adenauer, took part.

On 4th December, 1918, two minor Centre (Catholic Party) politicians, Father Kastert and Dr. Trimborn, addressed a big public meeting in Cologne demanding the constitution of a free Rhenish-Westphalian State within the German Reich. The *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, the official Centre paper which afterwards fought the treacherous work of the French-paid "Separatists," lent its support to this Catholic-inspired scheme for protecting West Germany from revolution and for crippling the Prussian Protestant influence on the Rhine. Dr. Trimborn made another forward move at Trier, and on 1st January Dr. Adenauer called a meeting of the Rhineland deputies at Cologne Rathaus to consider the question of a federal Rhenish State.

But by this time the French danger had become apparent. It would be libel to dub any of the men concerned in this evanescent movement with the title of Separatist, which later became a name of infamy on the Rhine. The conference at Cologne Rathaus had so much evidence before it of the activities—even so early in the day—of French secret agents that it declined to do more than to appoint a committee to study the question. The Social Democrats, seeing behind the scheme a

Catholic plan to secure predominance, offered the most strenuous opposition, declaring that the proclamation of a Rhenish State would be countered by a general strike. The Federalist idea was a purely Catholic movement, dangerous, but never treacherous. It never contemplated the independent "Rhenish Buffer State" between France and Germany which constituted the minimum of the secret French programme for dismembering the Reich, and its authors would have merely chuckled at the French maximum ambition to annex the Left Bank of the Rhine outright. The real "Separatist" movement, headed by a few fools and many gaolbirds, and supported by hired renegades, which, with its "Revolver Republic," as loyal Germans christened the "State" it pretended to establish, was later to drench Rhineland in blood in times of peace, was from start to finish a creation of the French, organized and paid for by their secret service and chauvinist organizations.

The French attempts to use the Catholic extremist Federalist movement as a catspaw soon became transparent. On 9th June, 1921, a meeting of all Rhenish parties at Königswinter, just outside Occupied Territory, placed all consideration of altering the status of Rhineland so long as a single foreign soldier remained on Rhenish soil beyond the pale for every honest citizen. Six months later all parties, including, of course, the Catholic (Centre) Party, issued a powerful condemnation of the mercenary "Separatists" of the French, speaking of the

"brutal frankness with which the French Rhine politicians are relentlessly pursuing their aim of cutting Rhineland adrift from Germany. . . . The systematic agitation against Prussia is merely a preparation for separating Rhineland from Germany." No independent eye-witness of events in Rhineland between 1918 and 1923 can doubt that this historic declaration set forth with accuracy and precision the true situation.

But the Powers had many other cares—there was no one to sound a note of warning. The Press of the Allied countries was almost entirely closed to any criticism of France or plea for Germany, and so the French got a free hand for pursuing, with the largely unwilling but for them indispensable support of their Allies, the policy which four years later was to plunge Europe into the worst period which it has known since 1914-1918—the invasion of the Ruhr and the attempt to set up a dummy Rhenish "Revolver Republic."

\* \* \* \* \*

In the middle of February, 1919, I had a valuable opportunity of inspecting a starving nation through a microscope. Together with Major Grasset, R.E., I was detached from the political Intelligence Section of General Headquarters, British Army of the Rhine, and dispatched on a special mission across the frontiers of Unoccupied Territory to the heart of revolutionary Germany. Our instructions were to draw up a report for the Supreme Council in Paris on the degree of starvation among the

population at large, and what foodstuffs it was essential to let through the blockade to avoid the reinforcing of Bolshevism's best ally—Starvation. There was no sentiment about our mission—our instructions were simply these: to make such recommendation as would allow Germany to purchase enough bare necessities to prevent her from becoming a Bolshevik danger to ourselves. We had a second mission: to report to the military authorities whether Germany was secretly preparing to resume the war.

Our destination was Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, Stettin and Danzig, but we fell victims to the great influenza epidemic and never got beyond Frankfurt. We took fifty days' rations for ourselves and our servant—two enormous packing cases and several sacks of bread. The occasional explosion of hand-grenades and the patter of machine-guns as the battle surged backwards and forwards between "Spartacus" revolutionaries and Government troops in Berlin a few streets away disturbed our night's rest little more than it did the listless fox-trotting of hungry-eyed, hollow-cheeked elegance in the lounge to the music of a band of better quality than the dry-grass tea and the aniline "foam" cakes which accompanied the music.

At Frankfurt we found the "Arbeiter-Soldaten Rat" in command. The old officers were retained, but their orders were subject to the approval of the "Workers' and Soldiers' Council." No man saluted, but officers saluted one another with extreme punctiliousness. They realized the

situation could not last (in point of fact a neat "coup" turned the tables of the Frankfurt Soldiers' Council within a week of our departure), and were, meantime, content to have so good-natured and mild a brand of "revolutionaries" to deal with as the elected of the Frankfurt garrison. The men at this time did no parades, but everyone would cheerfully lend a hand when invited to do the necessary cleaning up.

A miracle in defeated, broken, starving and revolution-torn Germany was the defence against the Poles. The men were attracted to the colours with difficulty, the chief bait offered being a sufficiency of food on reaching the Polish front, yet I saw many a company marching off as merrily as though the calendar had remained a blank from August, 1914, to December, 1918. Gaily the band blared the German marching songs which for years had been playing a million men to their graves. With skull and crossbone aluminium badges and oak-leaves in their caps, with the girls of Frankfurt waving from the windows and throwing flowers to their defenders, these boys marched out to fill the last German war-graves on the near-by front where the Poles were trying to secure a little extra territory before the Treaties could be drawn up.

Our business was chiefly with the Bürgermeister (for the civilian rationing) and with Lieutenant Busse, the Garrison Adjutant for military matters. Having opened our first packing-case, we invited Busse to breakfast.

I have never seen a better trencherman

than the tall, immaculate Prussian *Oberleutnant*. Bacon and eggs with fried potatoes were his *hors d'œuvres*, supported by half a dozen sardines, twelve slices of bread and butter and toast, five big cups of tea, and then bread and cheese to fill in the corners. He was starving, of course, like everyone else; all our subsequent guests did equal execution to our army rations. Major Grasset spoke no German, and spent most of the time in bed with a dangerous dose of influenza. Busse and I became great pals, to the surprise of the population, and to the indignation of one (anonymous) old lady who wrote a letter of passionate hatred to me at my hotel. But here, in the heart of Junker-Prussia, she was the only person in three weeks who offered a hostile word or glance to the two men in enemy uniform spying out the land.

I docketed Busse as a pleasant but brainless young officer, and was amused to learn afterwards from my war-time adjutant of the 12th (City of Bristol) Battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment, Major Jack Likeman, D.S.O., that I was greatly mistaken. Likeman served for several years on the Inter-Allied Military Mission of Control, engaged in disarming Germany. After lunching with Busse at his regimental headquarters one day, Likeman proceeded on a round of inspection. "Acting on information received," he asked for the floor-boards of Busse's orderly-room to be taken up, discovering beneath them a couple of hundred rifles with a good complement of machine-guns. So much for a monocle and an inane expression.

The rationing of the civilian population was such that we felt ashamed to send down our good meat and vegetables to the hotel kitchen for cooking. Uneatable meat only once a week, artificial butter, pith bread, acorn coffee, aniline jam—we saw and tasted them all among the queues of starving people awaiting their rations. In the slaughter-house were a few emaciated carcasses (the week's supply for the town), including two skinny, tuberculous cows. The most diseased portions of the latter were cut out and burnt, the remainder boiled and issued for human consumption.

Hospital conditions were appalling. A steady average of 10 per cent. of the patients had died during the war years from lack of fats, milk and good flour. Camphor, glycerine and cod-liver oil were unprocurable. This resulted in high infant mortality, especially from tuberculosis, kidney and stomach disorders. Old people were simply admitted to die between clean sheets—no effort could be made to save them while youth was dying so fast.

We saw some terrible sights in the children's hospital, such as the "starvation babies" with ugly, swollen heads. For three years the hospital had had no fish, no rice since 1914, no eggs for five months, and for five weeks no butter or fats. We saw one of the Sisters dining on sticky "Ersatz" bread, smeared with butter substitute—a preparation of ground maize and water.

Such were the conditions in Unoccupied Territory. Our report naturally urged the immediate opening of the frontiers for fats, milk



and flour, and confidently asserted that there was not the slightest danger of broken Germany using such supplies to re-form her shattered army. But the terrible blockade was maintained as a result of French insistence and British compliance, with hopelessly inadequate relaxations from time to time, from November, 1918, until the Treaty of Versailles was signed in June, 1919.

Long before that, however, the population of Occupied Territory had started to receive better supplies. No severity of punishment could restrain the Anglo-American divisions on the Rhine from sharing their rations with their starving German fellow-creatures; sentences of imprisonment relentlessly imposed by the Summary Military Courts on civilians for "being in possession of Allied Army Property" were powerless to prevent the hungry Rhinelanders from buying (or stealing) "bully beef" and bread from the troops. A whiff of Virginia tobacco-smoke from a German's cigarette in the streets was enough to cause him to be summoned on the same charge, while it was a jest of the barrack-rooms that a soldier had but to walk down the Hohestrasse in Cologne making a noise like a cake of soap or a stick of chocolate to win the favour of any girl in the city.

In mockery of the German comic-opera song from "*Der liebe Augustin*" ("Princess Caprice") beginning :—

"Wo steht es denn geschrieben  
Du sollst nur *eine* lieben ?  
Man schwärmt ja auch für mehrere,  
Für leichtere, für schwerere."

the Germans themselves put the parody into the mouth of the British Tommy :—

“ Wo steht es denn geschrieben  
Du sollst nur *Deutsche* lieben ?  
Man schwärmt ja auch für Engländer,  
Für Schottländer, Neuseeländer,  
Komm mit, mein schönes Mädchen,  
Es gibt auch Schokolädchen ;  
Komm mit mir in mein Himmelmreich,  
Dort gibt es Büchsenfleisch.”

This the usual mess-poet translated as :—

“ Tis not decreed at present  
The Hun alone is pleasant  
Here Scotch and English are the rage—  
New Zealanders, with taking ways.  
Our chocolate will please you  
If we may kiss and tease you.  
Come, Gretchen, stroll along the Rhine—  
Our bully-beef is fine ! ”

The sight of German starvation finally became unbearable, and early in 1919 the British Commander-in-Chief telegraphed to the Supreme Council in Paris that to enable him to maintain discipline it was essential that the Germans among whom the troops were living should be allowed to have food.

This outspoken telegram proved effective. Supplies were at last allowed to be imported by the starving Rhinelanders and surplus Army stocks were sold to them. Knowledge of the British Commander-in-Chief's telegram soon leaked out and laid the foundation—on top of that other one which always existed, though sunken and buried beneath war passions—racial

kinship—for the subsequent relationship between Briton and German on the Rhine. But the starvation of the Germans across the imaginary line of "Occupied Territory" went on with but little amelioration until the beleaguered and disarmed nation purchased relief from the pangs of hunger with the signature to the Treaty of Versailles.

## CHAPTER II

### AN ABORTIVE PLOT

To those Allied subjects in Rhineland—still more so, no doubt, to those in Unoccupied Territory—who followed political developments with an open mind, the policy pursued towards defeated Germany gave evidence from the start of failure to grasp the realities of the situation. On the Political Intelligence Staff of General Headquarters, British Army of the Rhine, our only duty was to follow and report on German politics cautiously and critically, but naturally without bias. What we saw was the German people, mainly through that honest and moderate, if not particularly adroit party, the Social Democrats, struggling to cast off the fetters of what the Allies, and pre-eminently France, professed to have been fighting for four and a half years to destroy—"Prussian Militarism" and "German Nationalism." Yet what happened was that the policy adopted by the Allies—again pre-eminently France—towards the German people, fumbling as they were towards freedom, blinded like a man emerging into brilliant sunshine after ages of confinement in a dim dungeon, became the ally—the unexpected *Retter in der Not*—of discredited "Prussian Militarism" and "German Nationalism"



(Photo Joski, Cologne.)

*German Army retiring through Cologne before the British advance, December, 1918*



(Photo Joski, Cologne.)

*Cologne children dragging gun-limbers out of reach of the British advance after the horses had dropped dead*

as well as of a new force, the support of which was certainly not a declared "war aim" — Spartacism, or Bolshevism.

It would hardly be possible to exaggerate the strength of the "will to peace," the great revulsion of feeling against militarism, feudalism and imperialism which moved the German people after the collapse of 1918. But the Allied statesmen seemed to be obsessed with their own slogans even when the conflict had ended, and to be filled with a deep distrust of the genuineness of the German Revolution. They remembered only that the German Social Democrats had voted the War Credits in 1914 and dubbed them, too, "Militarists." They forgot that the Social Democrats had done so before the spectre of the Cossacks of Czarist Russia crossing the frontier. They forgot that the Social Democrats had made a condition of their entry into the "last hope" cabinet of Prince Max of Baden in 1918 the evacuation of Belgium and all other conquered territory, and the tearing up of the dictated Treaties of Bucharest and Brest Litovsk.

It would have seemed to be an act of wise statesmanship to have encouraged the elements in Germany which were the enemies of our enemies in that country — the militarists. Amid the inevitable sufferings in store for the starving, disarmed and defeated country, it would, in any case, have been difficult to maintain for long, enthusiasm for a new *régime* which must inevitably have been held responsible by the crowd for conditions which could not bear comparison

with those of the piping times of peace. If the Allies wished to strengthen that new *régime*, it was surely up to them to do something to enable Republican conditions at least to stand the contrast with those obtaining under the Empire. Instead, every imaginable inducement was held out to the German people to accord the answer which the Monarchist elements desired to their reiterated rhetorical questions :—

“ You see the works of your new master, Democracy. Were you not better off under us ? You flung aside the sword, trusting to the enemies of our country to act as your ‘ Liberators ’ from ourselves. Do you not see in the conduct of these enemies to-day how right we were to preach ‘ Trust to the sword and your strong right arm and to no other ’ ? Will you not call us back ? Will you not re-arm ? Will you not abandon the path of shame, of humiliation, of starvation, cast off the robes of repentance and return to our fold ? ”

That the German people answered these questions in the negative to the extent to which they have so far done is a tribute to their sound political instinct, despite their political inexperience. For the extent to which the voices of the past have nevertheless secured a hearing from the present, and will secure it from the future, the bitterness of the early post-war attitude of the Allies towards the German people must be held largely responsible. Fascism, Hitlerism, dreamers of *revanche* and of a new-born militarism—those are the plants which the Allies nurtured in German soil. Democracy, pacifism, international

understanding—those are the plants which, springing up after the Revolution, found themselves faced with the withering lack of sympathy and encouragement from the victorious Allies, who had it in their power for several vital years to encourage their growth by moderation and understanding. Wisdom—with many lapses—set in at Locarno, and has done much to heal the wound of the Rhine, but the scar remains. It is one of the biggest factors in the growth of the present dangerous trifling with the idea of a dictatorship in Germany.

All the world knows to-day that British and American statesmanship at Paris tried to stand out for more reasonable treatment for Germany, but was out-manœuvred by the implacable determination of France to be revenged on her enemy and to push the disruption of the German State to the extreme limit.

On the Rhine it was difficult to grasp that such a surrender was taking place. The belief in a united Allied policy was still strong, and we could only watch with amazement the intemperate demands of a section of the Press and stand aghast at the revelation that the rôle of the President of the United States as the mediator and peacemaker in Europe was one allotted him solely by—the President of the United States.

Month after month we watched the spontaneous efforts of the German people, of Ebert, Landsberg and Scheidemann to secure and consolidate the ground which had been won for democracy being foiled by Allied severity and



distrust. It was too early yet for the discredited militarist elements in Germany to make a vast amount of capital out of the severity of the Armistice terms, but the extreme Left did so, and before the troops had entered Cologne a nominal "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" had been proclaimed in Unoccupied Germany. The Spartacist revolt when this dictatorship proved to be purely nominal gave Germany a blood-stained Christmas and ended with the murder of the arrested Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg by their escorts.

But this revolt of the extreme Left gave the extreme Right its first chance to come back. The German Imperial Officers were called in by that curious Socialist, Noske, to put down the *Putsch* from the Left, thus paving the way for the monarchist Kapp *Putsch*, which followed almost immediately on the realization of the full severity of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles when they came into force on 10th January, 1920.

The driving force behind all German extremist appeals was always the situation on the Rhine. Throughout the sittings of the Armistice Commission and during the drawing-up of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles France was hard at work trying to embody in it the separation of this territory from Germany. On the Rhine itself the French military authorities were employing all means at their disposal to manufacture evidence that the population of the Left Bank of Germany's most historic river were not real Germans, but "*celtes, comme nous*" as one

famous French proclamation phrased it. General Gérard, commanding the 8th French Army, which occupied the Bavarian Palatinate, and General Mangin, the French Commander-in-Chief at Mainz, were the "Advance Guard" of the French "Separatist" propagandists on the Rhine.

The French plans were quite simply to reduce the area and the population of Germany as much as possible—by treaty if it could be so effected, if not, by twisting a treaty. The minimum objective was the Palatinate (the Saar they regarded as safe in any case), the general intention to make the Rhine the western frontier of Germany, cutting off the whole of the Left Bank.

At times the idea of securing virtual overlordship of the whole of the Ruhr Valley entered into the dreams of French hegemony in Europe. Parallel with these schemes ran the encouragement of Bavarian separatism, with the idea of forming a great German Catholic block against Prussia, to include perhaps Austria. In pursuit of this aim France was at one time even prepared to contemplate the Wittelsbach Monarchy being restored. To encourage Bavaria to split off from the Reich, she appointed a special Minister to Bavaria, M. Dard. In Munich she even committed herself to intrigues with the Monarchist, von Kahr, and with the notorious "Fascist," Adolf Hitler. Her troops occupying Upper Silesia pending the plebiscite which was later provided for in the Treaty of Versailles played under the direction of their commanders and civil representatives much the same rôle as those in the Rhineland,

with Korfanty's Polish insurgents in place of Separatists. But both these adventures were subsidiary to the great struggle for the Rhine.

French aspirations to the Rhine were, of course, of very ancient date, stretching back through Napoleon's "Confederation of the Rhine" to the days of Louis XIV's devastations and subsequent hegemony on the Rhine and beyond. In the patriarchal tradition of the peasant a century and a half is no great lapse of time, and to-day the memories of General Mélac's cruelties with fire and sword are (doubtless unconsciously) preserved in the name so frequently given to the farmers' savage watch-dogs in the Palatinate—"Mélac."

The modern intention to oust Germany from the Rhine which was put into effect at the Armistice can be traced vaguely in Isvolsky's telegram of October, 1914, to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, declaring that the French war aims remained the same as they were at the St. Petersburg negotiations in 1913, "except for the desire to see the political and economic power of Germany destroyed."

On 12th January, 1917, M. Briand, although he had sent two days earlier to President Wilson a declaration of the war aims of the *Entente* wherein there was no mention of French aspirations to the Rhine, wrote a confidential dispatch to the French Ambassador in Washington claiming that the control of the Left Bank of the Rhine had been traditional French policy since Richelieu. On 1st February, 1917, the secret Franco-Russian Treaty was signed, giving Constantinople to

Russia, Alsace-Lorraine and the Saar to France, and cutting off the whole Left Bank of the Rhine from Germany and making it a buffer state under provisional French occupation. Marshal Foch's Note of 28th November, 1918, proposed more practically the annexation of the Left Bank, with conscription in the French Army for the able-bodied males among its 6,000,000 German inhabitants. A long series of Notes in 1919 from Foch and the French Government (including a concept of M. Tardieu) and a letter of M. Poincaré show how the other Allies were harassed by the French determination to annex in veiled or open form this cradle of the German race. It deliberately revived the discredited theory that a great river (which unites in trade instead of separating the peoples on its two banks) could be an ideal national frontier.

General Mangin and General Gérard, the two foremost exponents of French Rhine policy, lost no time in getting to work to "make a case" once the Occupation had begun. General Mangin found a tool in the person of Dr. Adam Dorten, a Wiesbaden lawyer, whose personal vanity had earned him from school onwards the nickname of "*Schöner Addi*"—"pretty Addi." This man, a person entirely devoid of political significance, became *faute de mieux* the head of the conspiracy. General Mangin himself had really no illusions as to Dorten's personal standing, but hoped through this foolish young lawyer with a bad "inferiority complex" to get into touch with real politicians. The bait, apart from promises of

personal advantages, was the suggestion that Rhineland would escape, wholly or in part, the burden of reparations if an independent Rhineland Republic was formed.

The first official reception of Dorten and his consorts by General Mangin took place on 17th May, 1919, when there were secret discussions concerning the financing and arming by France of a band of men to set up a "Rhineland Republic." Dorten's men were later given French arms permits and placed under the special protection of the French authorities. In May General Mangin flew to Versailles with a "Rhineland Republic" programme signed by Dorten, and on 1st June the first still-born Republic was proclaimed by "Pretty Addi" in Wiesbaden, with the undisguised co-operation of the French.

The irrefutable proof that the whole pitiful "conspiracy" was the work of the French Army and Secret Service is contained in President Wilson's letter to M. Clemenceau, expressing amazement at the report of General Liggett, then American Commander-in-Chief on the Rhine. On that very morning General Mangin had sent a colonel of his staff to General Liggett to ask for permission for a "revolution" to be held in the American zone of occupation, with the object of proclaiming a "Rhineland Republic" independent from Germany, and offering to supply fifty "agents" to run the "spontaneous" outburst. Liggett refused to countenance the proposal, ordered the immediate expulsion of any agitators and the confiscation of their propaganda. Wilson

expressed to Clemenceau his complete approval of these measures. To America belongs the honour of thwarting the first French attempt on the Rhine.

The American rebuff rendered the whole plot automatically abortive, but the squib, though damped, had to go off. Dorten's "proclamation" of the "Republic" was posted all over the French zone on 1st June, 1919 (except in the Palatinate), and after causing a little amusement to the few Germans who caught sight of it, was mercifully disposed of by wind and weather. In the Palatinate General Gérard tested the political temperature on the same day, when his tools, a handful of pot-house politicians whom he had grouped together in the "*Bund Freie Pfalz*" ("Free Palatinate Union") "proclaimed" a still-born "Palatinate Republic" by affixing posters to the walls, which were promptly torn down. The laughing crowds who removed them could not at first imagine that such an absurdity could mean anything, and proceeded to give the traitors some very rough handling when they found that it was intended seriously.

The Germans laughed too soon. They greatly under-estimated the tenacity of the French. Immediately after this first essay General Gérard, having forbidden the local Press to touch the subject, began an energetic campaign for putting a French veneer on the Germans of the Palatinate. On 8th June he summoned the "*Bund*" to the Hotel Schwan in Landau and unfolded his wishes to them. In the course of

the month he presided at other meetings of these German renegades and instructed his troops to distribute their leaflets, causing heavy sentences of imprisonment to be inflicted on persons found in possession of one single copy of a loyalist circular which had been issued condemning the "movement."

All political meetings except those of the traitors were forbidden. Even the humble onion, even the popular song were conscripted to serve the French schemes. I have a copy of a letter signed by the "Adjutant" of the "*Bund*," named Eggersdorf, stating that those who wished French permits to export onions through the Allied blockade would be well advised first to become contributors to the funds of the "*Bund*," which was working to detach the Palatinate from the Rhineland.

Even the old folk-song "*Mein Sohn, zieh nicht an den Rhein*" ("My son, beware of the Rhine") is solemnly cited as "Prussian evidence" of the great gulf fixed between the Palatinate and Prussia by Major Paul Jacquot, an officer of General Gérard's staff. The stern Prussian, he argues, "the man of the East," warns his son against the charms of the Rhinelanders, "people of the West." This Frenchman, arguing with typical "Prussian" heaviness, fails to remark that the urgency of the Prussian father's warning might perhaps be held also to prove a fear of the readiness with which Prussian and Rhinelanders might mingle. But when every person of note in the Palatinate — chiefs of political parties,

deputies, leaders of finance, commerce, industry and agriculture—gathered on 18th May on the invitation of the Regierungs-präsident (Governor), Von Winterstein, to pass a unanimous declaration of loyalty to Germany, General Gérard forbade the Press to mention it.

He followed the same course concerning the gathering of ten thousand people in the cathedral square of the capital, Speyer, on 2nd June (the day after the attempted "*Putsch*,"<sup>1</sup> where the French were defied by the singing of "*Deutschland über Alles*" and other proscribed national airs). In addition, he flung many of the speakers into prison; a school-teacher named Stelzenmüller, for example, was kept in gaol for three months because his pupils had dared to sing their national anthem. The night before the first ill-fated Palatinate *Putsch* General Gérard seized the Governor of the Province, Von Winterstein, and expelled him with other prominent Loyalists into Unoccupied Germany. A town councillor of Speyer, Herr Ober, was dragged in fetters and flung into gaol because a stock of patriotic leaflets denouncing the traitors was found in his house. These arbitrary acts, which were to recur in hundreds daily in 1923 and 1924, aroused great bitterness in these early days; but the population was then able to console itself by reflecting that on paper, at least, the "war" was only suspended by an armistice. None of the general public imagined that Peace was to bring hundreds

<sup>1</sup> An exact English equivalent for "*Putsch*"—a *coup d'état*—does not exist.



of thousands more such "victories" to French policy than did those days of "suspended warfare."

To satisfy American complaints, M. Clemenceau wrote to General Mangin disapproving of his activities in this matter. But the disapproval promised little consolation to the Germans of the Rhine, for M. Clemenceau, of course, committed himself whole-heartedly to the official French theory that these Germans were being "oppressed by Prussian functionaries." He did not in any way condemn General Mangin's policy in attempting to create his impossible "Rhineland Republic." He merely rebuked him for "indiscretion" in revealing the French plans by asking the Americans to support his sham revolution and deprecated his entering, as a General, into a field which should have been left to the French Government. If any Frenchman deserves a statue of the Rhinelanders, it is certainly Mangin, for without his eager and blundering moves they might very well be cut off from Germany to-day and subject to France, an indifferent world having been persuaded that it was their wish. It is in no little measure due to the happy tactlessness of this French soldier that the world to-day sees the great scar of the Rhine beginning to heal, instead of becoming a festering sore, ready to break out into a new Franco-German war.

To M. Tardieu we are indebted for setting on record that the British and American authorities on the spot had their eyes opened by General Mangin. Tardieu writes of Mr. Lloyd George :—

"He accuses us of initiating political intrigues in the very moment when we were asserting that we sought only military guarantees. He says with bitterness: 'At this moment your generals are working to establish a Rhineland Republic. That is the last way to ensure its coming into existence. This is also the opinion of General Robertson; Barnes and Bonar Law agree.'"

In the light of this, Mr. Bonar Law's subsequent friendly "send off" of the French when in 1923 they played the trump card of their Rhineland policy—the occupation of the Ruhr—is all the harder to understand.

Later M. Tardieu says:—

"On the left bank of the Rhine one saw how the stubborn opposition of Great Britain (with which the United States soon associated herself) blocked the road for the policy of autonomy which France recommended for the only territory where it was possible. Dr. Dorten, an ex-Civil Servant, devoid of any authority or position, had himself proclaimed (in posters exhibited at Wiesbaden) 'President of the Rhenish Republic.'"

President Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George respectively received two very similar reports from the Commanders-in-Chief of the American and British troops, giving the impression that this "comic opera scheme" had been approved of by the French military authorities. On 2nd June Mr. Lloyd George began his campaign to persuade M. Clemenceau to renounce the occupation of the Left Bank of the Rhine, which he considered would prove a hot-bed for intrigues and a danger to the peace of Europe.

The occupation, to which Mr. Lloyd George

finally gave his consent, more than fulfilled all the forebodings which he had entertained and kept the worst unhealed wound of Europe open for many critical and perilous years. His private judgment has been proved by events to have been as accurate as it was unsuspected by the delirious voters of the "Khaki Election" who returned him triumphantly to power with a mandate, not to heal the wounds of the Rhine, but to make them as nearly fatal as possible for Germany.

Just a month after the *Putsch* that failed Germany was forced by despair and starvation into signing the Treaty of Versailles. A certain display of force was made in the occupied zones. British troops moved in long columns across the Rhine and were massed at the bridge-heads, ready for the order to advance and renew the "war." Tanks concentrated around Cologne Cathedral. There was, of course, never any question but that the Germans would sign, not merely this crushing Treaty, but one infinitely worse for them (had it been possible to draw it up), for across the frontier the biggest part of the population was still—eight months after the cessation of the fighting—literally starving. The existence of those few people, Germans and others, who thought or pretended to think that the Treaty might be rejected, showed that after all there were some people in the world who had never known what it was to be really hungry.

The actual signature of the Treaty on 28th June, 1919, was marked in Cologne by

British guns opening fire for the first time on German soil, when a battery of field artillery fired a salute across the Rhine close to the statue of William II on the Hohenzollern Bridge. The Germans, perhaps, realized that Great Britain would have disliked resuming hostilities only a little less than they themselves; they certainly knew that nothing would please the French better than to be able to "cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war" again.

Apart from the official celebrations, the British remained perfectly calm. A hint was given from Headquarters that private ebullitions of joy in the midst of the crushed "enemy" should be avoided, but it was hardly needed. Those who took a serious interest in the political situation realized that the Treaty contained the germs, not only of an eventual real settlement which this dictated instrument alone could never bring, but those of many fresh conflicts. Such people were little inclined to rejoice. The others were occupied with the problems of getting themselves demobilized, if they had jobs to return to, or of prolonging their jobs on the Rhine if they had not. Generally, it was noted with relief that after the signature of peace with Germany it would be difficult for the Provost-Marshal's staff to continue arresting soldiers for the "crime" of "fraternizing with the enemy," if they were caught speaking to any citizen—more particularly to any female citizen—of Cologne in public.

For French policy this marked the conclusion of an epoch. It had proved impossible to confront

the treaty-makers with a *fait accompli* on the Rhine. Occupation had been secured—but neither annexation nor disintegration. How could the first be turned into one of the latter two?

There were two valuable instruments of policy—the first, the military authorities. They had failed once by their blundering precipitancy on 1st June in Wiesbaden and in the Palatinate. Their power would, in any case, be limited shortly by the “Rhineland Agreement” between the Allies and Germany regulating the Occupation whereby the supreme power was to pass on the ratification of the Treaty into the hands of the second instrument—four civil “High Commissioners” of the Allied countries concerned in the Occupation.

The main business of working to detach the Rhineland from Germany was entrusted to the able hands of the future French High Commissioner, M. Paul Tirard. The military were to co-operate with him, and did so—though with less subtlety than M. Tirard displayed—throughout the next few years. In the interim between signature and ratification (28th June, 1919, to 10th January, 1920), the threads of the conspiracies inaugurated under General Mangin and General Gérard were never dropped, while others were made ready for the skilful handling of M. Paul Tirard, to whose ability the Germans testified by conferring on him the title of “*der alte Fuchs*”—“the Old Fox.”



*Mr. Julian Piggot, British Commissioner at Cologne, with  
Colonel McLachlan, G.S., the Author and Sir Samuel  
Hoare on the British Aerodrome, Cologne*



(Photo Landauer Anzeiger)

*M. Paul Tirard, French High Commissioner (in bowler hat)*

### CHAPTER III

## TWISTING A TREATY

THE Germans, as has been shown, were not in a condition to resist or even to offer effective protest against any of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles when it was presented to them for signature. The supplementary document put before them to regulate the conditions of the Occupation they had to swallow in the same way. The "Rhineland Agreement," as it was called (together with the "Proclamation of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission," issued on the legal birth of that body), became the charter of the Occupation. Had its provisions been observed in a judicial spirit, it might have proved a charter securing in fact to the six million inhabitants of Rhenish territory, who were entering on a period of eleven years of subjection (in peace time) to foreign troops, such liberties as its provisions only professed to guarantee.

The credit for its conception must be given to Woodrow Wilson, and to Pierrepont Noyes, the first American Commissioner in Rhineland. Wilson, it is generally conceded, desired an idealistic peace which should hasten the reconciliation of the warring peoples. His disillusionment, and that of all who believed in him, at the

document of Versailles, to which he was finally made to put his signature, could not have been made greater had he lived to see what was made of the Rhineland Agreement.

He detested the idea of the "brutal soldiery" having a free hand to domineer over the civil population of the Rhineland throughout the years of the Occupation. He wished to see a civilian administration in supreme control. Pierrepont Noyes drafted the instrument which was to be the charter giving effect to this wish. It was, with some few alterations, eventually passed by the French as "good enough," and became the charter for their political intrigues. Neither Wilson nor Noyes foresaw the situation which subsequently arose when America withdrew from the Rhine and left Britain with the duty of upholding the spirit of the Agreement, while France secured the allegiance of Belgium in her plan to force her own interpretation through by out-voting the solitary British High Commissioner. All that the humane aspirations of the two Americans effected was that the power to coerce the Rhinelanders into treachery to their country was transferred from the hands of the French military clique into those of the French politicians and diplomats—far more efficient and discreet persons to perform the task than the soldiers, who now became the instruments of policy (their normal rôle) instead of having to masquerade as its directors. The velvet glove was drawn over the iron hand that it might grip the tighter without attracting public attention. France never did a



more astute thing than when she acquired both a marketable grievance and a cloak for her designs by resignedly giving way to the United States and surrendering military for civilian control on the Rhine.

It is worth glancing at this little-known document, the Rhineland Agreement, which was to be "twisted" by the victors as few have been in modern history.

Article 1 defines the purpose of the Occupation as being a "guarantee of the execution by Germany of the Treaty." In this spirit the brief American occupation (1918-23) was conducted; in this spirit and no other was the British occupation (1918-29) conducted, except for the many reluctant surrenders to France. Not for one moment was this the principle which guided France (and for nearly six years Belgium also) in the conduct of her occupation.

"No German troops shall be admitted to the Occupied Territories,"

Article 1 also lays down. No German loyal troops ever were—but we shall see that the German gaol-bird troops of the Separatist traitors armed, drilled and fought, not only with impunity, but under armed French protection.

"There shall be constituted a civilian body styled the Inter-Allied Commission which . . . shall be the supreme representation of the Allied and Associated Powers within the occupied territory. It shall consist of four members representing Belgium, France, Great Britain and the United States."

Within a few months this "civilian body" of "four members" was a vast, unwieldy, and expensive organization of many hundred persons. The four High Commissioners were civilians indeed. The rest of the vast Commission machinery was almost purely military. At Cologne, for example, the staff of the British Military Governor (on which I myself was then serving) merely changed its title overnight.

Coblenz had been the seat of an embryo body without real authority, styling itself unofficially "The Rhineland Commission." On the morning of the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles the Commission "went High," to the accompaniment of the national anthems of the Allies played by an American military band, and thereby acquired supreme power in Rhineland. The Union Jack, Old Glory and the French and Belgian tricolors were run up the flagpoles over the Oberpräsidium building (the seat of the Administration of all the Rhine Provinces, from which the Germans had been turned out), the troops saluted four rather embarrassed gentlemen in top hats—Sir Harold Stuart (Great Britain), Mr. Pierrepont Noyes (United States), M. Paul Tirard (France) and M. Roland Jacquemyns (Belgium)—and the officers of the staff picked up their pens again without realizing that the uniforms they wore already indicated a violation of the Agreement.

I was myself of the staff of the Military Governor of Cologne — Lieut.-Colonel Rupert S. Ryan, D.S.O., R.F.A. As the unofficial commission with a very small "c" went "High"

and became the "Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission" with very emphatic capitals, so did the Military Governor of Cologne become the Commissioner in Cologne of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission. Like a few of his staff, Colonel Ryan was a regular soldier; like the majority, I was a "temporary." But the regulars did not resign their commissions, the temporaries were not demobilized, and neither doffed their uniforms for a couple of years, except at times when they had a peculiar aching for liberty. So much for the "civilian body."

Article 3 provided:—

"The High Commission shall have the power to issue Ordinances so far as may be necessary for securing the maintenance, safety and requirements of the Allied and Associated Forces."

This provision embodied in perfectly correct form the principle that the Rhineland High Commission was merely a body of four civilians to whom was given the right to legislate in the interests of the Armies of Occupation. This in itself was, of course, a thorn in the flesh of the Military High Command, which ridiculed the idea of four gentlemen in top hats and morning coats "securing the maintenance, safety and requirements" of 600,000 men at arms. At all events, it set a modest limit to the competence of the High Commission.

In later years, especially after the occupation of the Ruhr began in January, 1923, the Germans cited this clause again and again when objecting

to some of the more extravagant Ordinances of the High Commission. They could not grasp, for instance, how (to take a few examples at random) Ordinance 132 "regarding the Seizure of Coal Tax," Ordinance 133 "Regarding the Seizure of certain Pledges from the Customs Receipts," or Ordinance 140 "Regarding the Protection granted by the High Commission to Individuals who shall have observed the Special Ordinances of the High Commission," could be held to concern either the "maintenance, safety or requirements" of the Allied troops. In point of fact, the Ordinances of the High Commission were in many instances framed by the French to secure, not these objects at all, but the success of their policy of splitting off the Rhineland from Germany.

"The Civil Administration of the provinces . . . shall remain in the hands of the German authorities and the Civil Administration of these areas shall continue under German law and under the authority of the Central German Government, except in so far as it may be necessary for the High Commission by Ordinance under Article 3 to adapt the administration to the needs and circumstances of military occupation."

Thus ran Article 5 of the Rhineland Agreement. It is merely necessary to state in this connection that by the end of the Ruhr struggle some 140,000 men, women and children had been summarily deported at a few hours' notice by the French and Belgians for offences, not against the Occupation sanctioned by the Peace Treaties, but for obeying the orders of the Central German

Government to refrain from giving disloyal assistance to the French in their attempts to realize their secret political aims.

Article 6 declared that :—

“The right to requisition in kind and to demand services in the manner laid down in the Hague Conventions of 1907 shall be exercised by the Allied and Associated Armies of Occupation.”

This right to requisition was stretched very widely by all the Armies of Occupation. The Germans, from motives of policy, refrained from protesting against the requisition, for example, of hundreds of fairy-lights and the necessary labour to wire them for the electric illumination of a general's garden-party in the British zone, but the French and Belgian violations of the terms of this Article were all conscientiously recorded in protest Notes, to the annoyance of M. Paul Tirard and his Belgian colleague.

Article 11 is interesting for its prohibition of the erection of “wireless telegraphy installations” without authorization by the Allied Military Authorities. This provision was so interpreted as to leave the whole six million inhabitants of the Rhineland without ordinary wireless receiving sets for several years, during which the rest of the world was learning to make “tuning-in” on the wireless part of the routine of daily life.

In what way the strains of the jazz-band playing in the Hotel Adlon in Berlin, or the dulcet tones of some portly Berlin “uncle” entertaining

his "*Liebe Kinder*," would have imperilled "the maintenance, safety and requirements" of the Allied Armies in the Rhineland, the High Commission would have been hard put to it to explain. Fortunately for them, they did not need to, since it was perfectly easy to stretch Article 11 (which was obviously intended merely to prevent the transmission of secret military and political messages) to cover the prohibition of broadcasting, as a nephew of Hugo Stinnes, aged seventeen, found to his cost when he was fined several hundred pounds sterling by the British Summary Court in Cologne for the crime of building a set to listen-in to the Berlin programme.

On the great day when the Commission "went High" to the accompaniment of martial music a very instructive "Proclamation of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission" was issued. Therein, this body—

"pledges itself to the inhabitants of the Rhineland to carry out in spirit and in letter the statute regulating the Occupation, the liberal character of which is without precedent in history."

Whatever opinion may be held as to the "liberal character" of the Rhineland Agreement, he would be a bold person who attempted to maintain that the invasion of Frankfurt-am-Main by black troops, the Occupation of the Ruhr, the seizure of coal stocks and railways, the imprisonment — often under shocking conditions — of thousands of peaceable Germans and the expulsion of a further 140,000—in most cases for nothing

worse than a refusal to disobey the dictates of simple loyalty and the orders of their Government, could be described as the observance either "in spirit" or "in letter" of the Agreement.

Nor do these things accord well with the declarations in this Proclamation that—

"The Inter-Allied High Commission desires to rely on the collaboration of the German officials and magistrates to ensure, in full harmony with it, the institution of a state of order, work and peace for the population of the Occupied Territories. Responsible for public order, of which the burden lies finally on the troops of Occupation, it means to guarantee to the people of the Rhineland justice, the enjoyment of their public and private liberties and the development of their legitimate aspirations and of their prosperity.

"The High Commission hopes that the intercourse between the troops of the Allied Nations and the inhabitants of the Rhineland will not be a cause of friction but rather the means for the peoples to know each other better and to advance, in the mutual efforts of work, of order and peace, towards the future of a happier humanity."

It is impossible to describe in detail what life meant to the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories under this Statute whose "liberal character" was "unprecedented in history." In the British and American zones the inhabitants at least suffered little political persecution. Neither Great Britain nor the United States had any other fish to fry than to see that an iron discipline—in Coblenz, under the Americans, less rigid, but more erratic than in Cologne, under

the British — was maintained over the civilian population.

The curfew of the early days which forced six million adults to be home, first at 8.0, then at 9.0, 10.0 and 11.0 p.m. was gradually relaxed and finally disappeared. So did the injunction on the inhabitants at large to doff their hats to every Allied officer, but this duty of doing obeisance to the conqueror by a salute remained (and was strictly enforced by the Summary Military Courts) until the last day of the occupation for policemen, firemen, customs and forestry officials.

In addition to his German papers, every person over fourteen had to have an Allied identity card, even if his home was in unoccupied Germany. He or she was subject to arrest and trial by a military court upon any charge brought by a member of the Allied Forces. The courts were conducted as fairly as circumstances allowed — on the principle of the Battalion Orderly Room — that above all discipline must be maintained and full credence given to any allegation of an officer or non-commissioned officer unless there was completely overwhelming rebutting evidence. The interpreters — Germans — caused many a conviction by the inaccuracy of their English and their subservience to the vagaries of military judicial temper, lest they might themselves get into trouble. The most trifling incidents had serious consequences. Many a German *Hausfrau* who had a dispute with the wife of a sergeant or of the private soldier billeted upon her over the use of a common kitchen or bathroom appeared



the next day between two soldiers with fixed bayonets for summary trial and sentence on a charge of "insulting a member of the Army of Occupation."

Article II of the Ordinances of the High Commission directed that letters might be intercepted, and telegrams and telephones tapped 'if necessary in the interests of public order or to secure the safety of the troops. The German public soon had it brought home to them that this Ordinance could, as usual, be stretched, and the punishment of persons who, in purely private letters, had permitted themselves some comment on the occupying forces which was judged offensive, showed that instead of being a purely exceptional measure to provide against possible plots, such secret censorship was being made part of the routine of occupation.

Shops, theatres, music-halls, cafés, beer-gardens, public offices, opera-seats, railway compartments, swimming baths, schools, recreation grounds, motor-cars, cottages and mansions were requisitioned and promptly labelled, not merely "For Allied Troops Only," but "No Germans Allowed Here." Everywhere the privileged uniforms of the conqueror—who at the start was exempted from payment for many services, and nearly always paid less than the native—reminded the German of the shame of foreign occupation. Nowhere could he quite escape the feeling that he was a second-rate human being.

That in the armies into which every available man had been drawn there was a number of black

sheep who took advantage of their privileged position to oppress the almost defenceless inhabitants goes without saying. That their number was very few, at least in the Anglo-Saxon zones, and that they were speedily removed when the Germans could make out a complete case against them—which was none too simple a task—has been testified to with generous fairness in dozens of German publications. But the shame and the humiliation inevitably remained, and bit like iron into the souls even of those luckiest inhabitants of the Occupied Territory—those who were controlled with military severity indeed, but tempered always with the Anglo-Saxon's peculiar instinct for fair play. Some there were who, with the truth—and the exaggerations—of German misconduct and atrocities in various places during the war ringing in their ears, missed no chance of "taking it out of the Bêche." But their number diminished as the months and years of Occupation rolled on, and the authorities were able to sift the chaff from the grain. Yet some of them remained, as the records of the military courts prove, up to the very end of the Occupation.

To add to the miseries of the starving and humiliated population came the horrors of inflation. Savings vanished almost overnight. The Allied troops eagerly ran to the bank to greet with obvious and natural satisfaction each fall in the mark which made their sound currency go farther, while it left the average German in despair as the purchasing power of his wages was halved month by month, week by week, day

by day. A tradesman who might sell out his stock of goods could, with the proceeds of sale, purchase a mere fraction of the original stock.

The "Hole in the West" added to German exasperation. The German Government was soon compelled to make all customs duties payable at gold rates. The French and Belgians refused to let this law operate in Rhineland, and depreciation of the paper mark soon resulted in the whole of the Occupied Territory being flooded with French and Belgian goods which had paid no duty at all—except in notes which soon were literally not worth the paper they were printed on. These goods progressed across the artificial "frontier" into Unoccupied Territory, to the enormous damage of German industry, faced at the same time with demands for gigantic reparations payments. Swarms of French *commis-voyageurs*, not always of the most creditable type, descended like locusts upon the Rhineland, everywhere protected and supported in their efforts for personal gain by the supposedly impartial hand of the military occupation. Only the growing impoverishment of the population set a limit to their voracity.

In the French and Belgian zones a carefully-organized system of "twisting the Treaty," of political espionage, bribery and propaganda, soon made not only "nationalism," but sober, decent patriotism a peril and set a premium on treachery. There was always food and work for the man, high or low, who would deny his own country. There were a myriad spies who listened, not

merely for remarks derogatory to the Allies which, properly enough, were severely punished, but for any expression of devotion to broken Germany, and of faith in her ultimate regeneration.

The Ordinances of the High Commission empowered that body to veto the appointment of anyone included in the (in bureaucratic Germany) wide category of "officials." Very soon town clerks, customs and forestry officials, railwaymen, school-teachers, civil servants, municipal employees of various grades and a host of other public servants discovered that to hold any patriotic sentiments was to be barred from taking office.

The censorship of the Press was stretched in the "Latin zones" of occupation to suppress patriotic sentiments. An *Index Expurgatorius*, which perhaps properly included "Anti-Entente" books, soon embraced all works liable to encourage the German's faith in the future of his race or country. "Simplicissimus" and most other German "*Witzblätter*" soon disappeared from the bookstalls, because of their supposedly humorous insults to the Allies, while the sale to the Germans of their opposite numbers from the Paris boulevards often containing no less vigorous insults to Germany was pushed by the French authorities with great vigour. Theatre pieces were censored to discover a single patriotic line, and the desirability of expelling from Occupied Territory as a danger to the Forces of an amusing low comedienne who strutted the cabaret boards wearing a German forage-cap and making light

of the hardships of a finished war was gravely debated by the French.

Simultaneously, vast sums of money, mostly German money (for Germany had to meet all "expenses of occupation"), were expended by the French on teaching the Germans of the Rhineland that they were not Germans at all, but "*celtes, comme nous*." All the civilization, they were told, which distinguished them from "*les barbares d'outre Rhin*" came from the French, to whom they really belonged. The propaganda services were centralized in Paris in "*L'office Centrale d'Expansion Nationale*" created by the Decree of 28th November, 1919, and placed directly under the Président du Conseil. Its most active agent was the famous "*Comité de la Rive Gauche du Rhin*," headed by Barrès and the Abbé Wetterle. According to the Budget of 1922, the "*Office Centrale*" (which had, of course, many other tasks besides that of propaganda in Rhineland) had a propaganda fund of 20,500,000 francs at its disposal, a secret service fund of 18,000,000 francs, and 8,000,000 francs for "commercial propaganda." The "*Comité de la Rive Gauche de la Rhin*," an association of prominent chauvinists pledged to carry out the official aim of gallicizing the Rhineland, was especially active in financing and directing the Separatist scheme.

In Rhineland the threads of this propaganda came together in the hands of M. Paul Tirard. Every possible avenue of penetration was explored. German newspapers were offered, openly or in

disguised form, French news services at non-commercial prices with which the German agencies could not have competed without subsidy. An ordinance of the Rhineland Commission ordered the German newspapers to print all news issued by the Commission: the "*Echo du Rhin*," the "*Revue Rhénane*," the "*Rhin Illustré*" and the "*Nachrichtenblatt*," all issued by the French, spread the new gospel direct. French reading-rooms and libraries sprang up on all sides (of course, in premises requisitioned from the Germans, nominally for the requirements of French troops), and soup kitchens and Christmas treats sought to bring the Rhinelander to murmur "*Die Franzosen backen auch Brot*"—"Daily bread is daily bread, whether baked by France or Germany." German schools were forced until the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles to establish French classes, while after ratification these courses were provided free and all possible pressure used to force the population to avail itself of them. Heavily subsidized publications, some mere daily newspapers printed in German, others really artistic and beautiful productions, taught this lesson, as did first-class French theatrical companies, entertainments for children, French Catholic priests, music-hall artists and pamphlets innumerable.

"Turn your back on the *barbares*, justly doomed to pay reparations to all eternity, return to the bosom of Mother France, who is anxious to welcome back her erring children of the Rhine, tricked as they have been by brutal Prussia into

believing themselves Germans, and trust to her generosity."

Such was the burden of the message, and the bewildered German of the Rhineland, shown to-day a box of candies, to-morrow a horsewhip and the next day candies again, scratched his head and murmured in his Rhineland dialect: "*Wat soll dat noch geve?*"—"How is this all going to end?"

The Occupied Territories enjoyed in the first two or three years of uncertainty and disorder which followed the revolution some substantial advantages to set off against the trials to which they were subjected. There were (until it suited the purpose of France in 1923 and 1924 to foment them) no disturbances of public order comparable to those which many parts of Unoccupied Territory had to face. During the Spartacist revolt of January, 1919, when the revolutionaries Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were murdered by the German officers to whom they had been entrusted as prisoners, while the streets of Berlin saw the bloodshed caused by the revolutionaries and by the "*Bluthund Noske*" in their suppression, the chain of Allied bayonets called a halt to plunder, arson, assassination and ruthless reprisals along the banks of the Rhine. The solid burgher, the "pursy cit," was not slow to recognize this advantage, and many were the unofficial requests made from neighbouring areas by the wealthy and the faint-hearted to have the doubtful "blessing" of foreign occupation extended to their towns and cities also. Before mob fury even nationalist sentiment paled.

I remember Hauptmann Schwenk, the "German Army of the Rhine" as he was called, because his was the only German uniform tolerated in Occupied Territory, discussing in all seriousness in the days of the worst disorders of 1919 the possibility of an English prince being induced to accept the crown of Germany. Whether Schwenk (the German "bridgehead officer" left behind by the German Army to settle outstanding matters between the Allied and German commands) spoke with as much sincerity as seriousness I cannot say. Since (to the strictly unofficial but genuine regret of all the Allied officers and officials who knew him personally) he had later to be deported when the system of espionage which he had organized among the German clerical employees of the Allies (the activities of which we had watched with almost benevolent amusement from its inception) became a nuisance, his sincerity may be doubted.

When Count Arco assassinated Kurt Eisner, the first Minister President of Bavaria, and the ensuing struggle placed Munich for two months, under a Bolshevik *régime*, nothing but a faint echo of the fighting crossed the banks of the Rhine. When the desperate Monarchist officers, driven crazy by the severity of the Allied demands, tried to set up a dictatorship by the Kapp *Putsch* of March, 1920, the five-day struggle left the Occupied Territories (alone in Germany) in peace.

The general strike with which the workers of Germany broke the revolt of the Reactionaries



was not tolerated (in the event it proved superfluous from the standpoint of the workers themselves) in Occupied Territory, but in the British zone a half-day protest strike except for the essential services was sanctioned. Several hundred thousand workers marched in endless procession through the pouring rain bearing Republican banners with such inscriptions as :—

“ Alle Räder stehen still  
Wenn der Arbeiter es will.”

(“ Every wheel of life stands still  
If it is the workers' will.”)

Within five days the wheels of Germany stood, indeed, so still that the Monarchists were glad to see the Republicans set them in motion again on their own terms. The subsequent outbreak of Communism in the Ruhr and the territory immediately beyond the British bridge-heads certainly caused great excitement on “our” side of the line, and at one period it was touch and go whether masses of extremist workers would not try to rush the frontiers to go to the aid of their Communist friends in the “Red Army of the Ruhr.” The British sentries, however, stood their ground, disarming and interning with perfect good humour first the Nationalist troops and later the defeated “Reds” who sought refuge from massacre in our zone.

One night during this rather anxious period there was a big ball in progress at the house of Colonel Ryan, my immediate chief (then Commissioner at Cologne), given in honour of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, who was visiting

the Occupied Areas. At the end of one dance Colonel Ryan's German butler approached me with deep repugnance written all over his face and said: "Herr Hauptmann, a swine who says he is the 'Bolshevist Commander-in-Chief of the Ruhr,' wants to speak to Colonel Ryan."

The Red Commander was indeed below stairs. He had a long colloquy with my chief, while Sir Henry Wilson upstairs told me the amazing story of how he had surveyed every inch of the subsequent battle-ground in France and Flanders in the course of inconspicuous bicycle tours a long time before the war. What would have been the feelings of the ladies present, had they known when their genial host rejoined them an hour later that he had just finished a conference, carried on directly beneath the light-tripping feet of the dancers, with a man who had come straight from the scenes of indiscriminate shooting and looting by his "troops" in the Ruhr, it would have been interesting to know.

The "Red Commander" came to us *in extremis*, for his short reign was over, and the Nationalists were now tolerating worse atrocities against his supporters than these latter had themselves committed. His mission was to beg British troops to cross the frontier into the Ruhr and drive back the Nationalists as being a threat to the Armies of Occupation, but of course he was unsuccessful. He returned to his defeated troops, to be shot down next morning.

It was during the suppression by the Reichswehr of Communism in the Ruhr that my

friend, F. A. Voigt, the fearless correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, who declined to cast a veil over the atrocities committed by the Reichswehr any more than over those of the Communists, was arrested and would have been shot out of hand but for the intervention of Berlin. The British authorities subsequently caused considerable unpleasantness for the German officer who gave orders to his guard to beat him. An American correspondent, Demott, whose attitude to the disorders was probably little less welcome to his Government than was that of Voigt to the British authorities, was actually murdered by the "Whites" before his country's diplomatic representative had the chance of affording him that full support which every British journalist abroad—"White," "Red" or "Salmon-Pink"—knows he can count on from his Consulate or Legation.

The French, always on the look-out for an opportunity to push forward their designs on the Rhineland, seized the excuse of German troops having of necessity been sent into the "neutral zone" of the Ruhr to restore order, to march themselves into Frankfurt-am-Main, Darmstadt and Hamburg with large contingents of negro troops. In this adventure they were strongly discouraged officially by the British and unofficially by the Americans. They were made to feel their isolation so severely that in May—two months later—they were obliged to withdraw when the Reichswehr left the Ruhr. Their action, especially the tactless employment of coloured soldiers when

white men were available, to commit a breach of the Rhineland Agreement, gave a fresh spur to German reaction and Nationalist sentiment.

In July Belgium somewhat unwisely took over the "Alsace-Lorraine" allotted her by the Peace Treaty, the Rhenish districts of Eupen and Malmedy. Although five-sixths of the population were German, the Allies had refused a plebiscite, but in order to do lip service to the principle of "self-determination" graciously permitted any inhabitant who wished to do so to call at the Belgian gendarmerie headquarters and record his objection in writing. Naturally very few were foolish enough thus to "black-list" themselves with those who in any case would be their future masters, and the area passed from German into Belgian hands. It was amusing to see how many newspapers described this affair as a "plebiscite" of the inhabitants, in which Germany had only a tiny minority of the "votes"; the Eupen-Malmedy transaction even appears in this distorted form in some books of reference. Belgium has since recognized the unwisdom of accepting this German white elephant, and but for French insistence that she should retain it would have sold it to Germany two years ago.

The French were not slow to take a lesson from the effect of British hostility to the Frankfurt adventure. Unfortunately, it did not teach them the unwisdom of pursuing their political ambitions in Rhineland, but it decided them to avoid precipitant action. The ease with which the advance had been carried out, and the quick

withdrawal of all German troops after the seizure of Frankfurt and the other towns, encouraged the chauvinists to proceed with an even more ambitious scheme than the separation of the Left Bank of the Rhine from Germany—the occupation of the wealthy mining and industrial area of the Ruhr, the heart of Germany's economic life, and the forcing of its industry into subordination to the French smelting and mining interests. At one period of the Ruhr Occupation a demand was even made in chauvinist circles for the annexation of the Ruhr. But the fact that the population of the Ruhr saw little but the horsewhip, while that of the Rhineland was never left long without an alternative glimpse of sugar-plums, confirms the general belief that the idea of annexing the former area was more or less an afterthought. The Ruhr was to be squeezed of its wealth, the Rhineland to be attracted permanently into the French orbit.

An opportunity to establish "advanced posts" came in March, 1921, when the German Chancellor, Dr. Simons, found himself unable at the London Conference to make any reparations proposal which would satisfy the Allies. With lightning rapidity the French and Belgians occupied Düsseldorf, Ruhrort and Duisburg, the gateways of the Ruhr, on 8th March, as "Sanctions." They had the nominal assistance of a small British contingent.

The French plan to apply the economic screw to Germany was now given effect to by

the establishment of a customs barrier between Occupied and Unoccupied Territory which was a fresh breach of the conditions of the Occupation. Great Britain, by her unfortunate participation in this adventure, unwittingly tied her hands in respect of the subsequent sanction for which it was a dress rehearsal—the Occupation of the Ruhr—in which she declined to play any part, but against which she could hardly have offered effective protest had she wished to do so in view of her participation in the “Sanctions” of 1921. Although on 10th May the Wirth Coalition Government accepted the Allied ultimatum, and risked the currency afresh by paying the first million of gold marks demanded on 31st August, the French and Belgians declined to evacuate Düsseldorf, Duisburg and Ruhrort. Yet these places had been seized to compel Germany to take the action which she did then take. The customs barrier was raised in September, but the gateways of the Ruhr were retained preparatory to the next step.

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No document of undisputed authenticity made public during the Rhine-Ruhr struggle possesses greater value for the Germans than the confidential report of M. Adrien Dariac, President of the Finance Committee of the Chamber, on the results of the inspection which he made of these areas on official instructions and at the especial desire of the *Comité des Forges*, the spiritual father of the whole Ruhr action. It was privately handed

to the members of the French Chamber on 28th May, 1922.

M. Dariac's report began reasonably enough by recounting the riches and the power of the "ten or twelve industrials of the Ruhr. Stinnes, Thyssen, Krupp, Haniel, Klockner, Funke, Mannesmann and three or four others," he wrote, "play a similar rôle to that of Carnegie, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt and Gould in America, but in addition have political power that is unknown to the American milliardaires." His argument was that upon these ten or twelve men depended the fulfilment or evasion by Germany of her reparation obligations.

From Düsseldorf, Ruhrort and Duisburg "we can destroy their industries root and branch," he wrote. "So long as we maintain our present position on the Rhine, we constitute a permanent threat to these rulers of German industry. . . . The possibility that we could even dream of restoring these pledges (the 'Sanction' towns) must be left out of all consideration. To-day we can either destroy or exploit German industry."

M. Dariac developed the (later) famous thesis that the Ruhr coke must be wedded to Lorraine ores, naturally under the supreme control of France, and thereby revealed the cloven hoof. If his premise that Germany—for the purpose of reparations—consisted of twelve Ruhr magnates who intended deliberately to default be admitted, his conclusion that France must grip them firmly by the throat until they disgorged was reasonable enough. It was a scheme to enforce fulfilment of

the Treaty of Versailles. But nowhere does that Treaty foresee the wedding—better, the ravishing—of German by French heavy industry which the *Comité des Forges* had, not in vain, expected M. Dariac to recommend.

"The moment," he wrote, "that we set foot on the right bank of the Rhine, and control 45,000,000 tons of ore per annum, we shall play a decisive rôle in German heavy industry and can demand control of its production."

Economically there was much to be said (from the French and German standpoints alone, never from that of the British, for whom it spelled fresh competition) for the wedding of Lorraine and Ruhr. The German industrials, however, were determined that there should be no rape, but a wedding of equal partners, and their insistence on this became the crux of the subsequent Ruhr struggle.

M. Dariac's supreme indiscretions came to light, however, when he spoke of France and the Left Bank of the Rhine. There is no pretence here of wishing to adhere to the Treaty or to the Rhineland Agreement. He records regretfully that the Rhinelander looked upon the troops "as temporary, unwelcome guests, whose only task was to see the Treaty carried out"—a very exact description of the only duty which the British tried to fulfil and the only one which the French and Belgians were properly entitled to undertake.

"French policy in the Rhineland," he airily declared (tearing another scrap of paper off the Treaty of Versailles), "is dependent on our Rhine



Army remaining longer in Occupied Territory. In the life of nations ten or fifteen years" (the latter being the limit set by the Treaty to the Occupation if Germany fulfilled her obligations) "counts for little. If we must withdraw so soon, our rôle is limited to that of an occupation to secure military guarantees. But if, on the other hand, we remain, possibilities of every kind are open to us. It is in this connection that all French Governments since 1919 have clearly and definitely asserted that in consequence of Germany's non-fulfilment the periods fixed for occupation have not yet begun to run."

Could the Germans have demanded more definite proof of the true French aims on the Rhineland than those with which the worthy M. Dariac so obligingly supplied them?

After his brief period of celebrity M. Dariac disappears from the pages of contemporary history. That France should have forgotten him—nay, should have tried even to forget his very name—would be comprehensible, but that Germany failed to keep green the memory of this, her best witness, is evidence of base ingratitude.

"The first move in our policy," he went on, "is the financial organization of the Rhineland—the erection of a customs barrier that on the east cuts it off from Germany and on the west opens the way to France, the compiling of a Budget independent of that of Germany, and the creation of a sound (Rhineland) currency to oust the sickly mark. The second move is the displacement of Prussian by 'Rhenish' officials" (we have

already progressed appreciably from Article 5 of the Rhineland Agreement, cited earlier in this chapter), "and the third the extension of the powers of the Rhineland High Commission and the summoning of an elected body. . . . This is a far-sighted policy whereby, step by step, a free Rhineland placed under the military protection of France and Belgium must separate itself from Germany."

The far-sighted policy, as the next chapters will show, was conscientiously followed. Only the anticipated result failed, sparing Europe from the inevitable chain of assassinations and revolts with the certain climax of a German-French war for the liberation of the German Rhineland.

It is not to be supposed that the Germans watched the development of these plans for the ruin of their country and the alienation of her richest territory in helpless indifference. Despite the vigilance of the Allied secret services, Nationalist propaganda developed more and more even in Occupied Territory under the very noses of the French themselves, while in "free" Germany it ran riot. At a secret conference of the industrials summoned by Hugo Stinnes at his private residence one Sunday in 1921 the great industrialist told his colleagues and competitors:

"*Meine Herren*—we are beating the waters in trying to avoid the French invasion of the Ruhr. It will cost us untold financial loss and many lives. But there will be no peace for us—there will be no united Germany—until the

French surgeon has cut his way into the heart of our industrial area and cut his way out again. I warn you all—prepare for the occupation of the Ruhr.”

M. Poincaré and Herr Stinnes did not take long to realize their joint “ambition.”

## CHAPTER IV

### ZERO

"THE measures which the Allied and Associated Powers shall have the right to take in case of voluntary default by Germany and which Germany agrees not to regard as acts of war, may include economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals, and, in general, such other measures as the respective Governments may determine to be necessary in the circumstances."

So runs Paragraph 18 of Annex II to the Reparations Section of the Treaty of Versailles, which the French claimed entitled them to ignore their British ex-Allies and march alone into the Ruhr. Shortage in deliveries of German reparation timber was made the occasion for this action. Lord—then Sir John—Bradbury is stated to have remarked that since the days of the Trojan horse wood had not been used for such an atrocious purpose. While the world at large imagined there was nothing more afoot than an academic discussion of whether or no Germany had defaulted, France struck. Against the vote of the British member, the Reparation Commission declared Germany "in voluntary default," and at the Paris Conference of 2nd—4th January, 1923, France claimed that this entitled her to take separate action.

On 9th January she declared a German default in coal deliveries (once more without the concurrence of Great Britain), and on the same day the French General Staff put into operation the long-prepared "Plan 18," and began the concentration at Düsseldorf of the troops detailed for the invasion of the Ruhr.

Meantime the Paris Conference broke up on 4th January, and with it the Anglo-French "Entente." Mr. Bonar Law declined to face that latter fact, however, and made the funeral wreaths which he dropped on its grave look to the world at large like congratulatory bouquets. Although he stated that the French action was likely to produce "disastrous economic effects" in Europe, and that the British Government "could not take part in or accept responsibility for it," he gave the impression that Britain nevertheless wished her war-time Ally the best of luck in the adventure she was undertaking. What grave reasons he may have had to refrain from roundly condemning M. Poincaré's "running amok" in an uneasy and shaky Europe lie outside the scope of this book.

In spite of French abuse, Britain loyally kept silent concerning the damning fact which Lord d'Abernon recently revealed, that the British Law Officers of the Crown later gave their considered judgment that the Occupation of the Ruhr was absolutely illegal. Outside France there has never been any authority to support the legality of her action. A pamphlet published at the time by British Periodicals Ltd., "Right and Wrong in the Ruhr Valley: a Study of the

Legal Aspect of the Franco-Belgian Occupation of the Ruhr," irrefutably established its illegality, and there can be no harm to-day in revealing that its anonymous author was the late Sir Francis Piggot, the eminent jurist, and father of the British Commissioner at Cologne of the Rhineland High Commission, Mr. Julian Piggot. The curious will also find the French position completely demolished in Mr. Joseph King's "The Ruhr" (1924), and at greater length in Paul Wentzcke's "*Ruhrkampf*."

Eighteen months before these events took place I had resigned my post on the Rhineland High Commission to take up journalism in the Rhineland. I had little encouragement. My friend, Mr. Crossley Sutcliffe, formerly Foreign Editor of the *Daily Express*, under whom I was to serve that newspaper six years later in Vienna, told me in 1922 that I was dooming myself to starvation and obscurity by seeking to write for the British Press from Cologne. He flatly refused to believe that the French were preparing material for the biggest post-war "story" which any newspaper man could hope to handle in Europe.

For a year I had pestered editors with articles on the French Rhineland plans. The kindlier ones told me that I was being "hopelessly taken in" by German propaganda, that France had no designs of any kind in the Rhineland, and that I had better go to another centre where there was really a chance of something happening. I pinned my faith to the Rhine and waited.

I satisfied Mr. Sutcliffe that he was correct

in his estimate of the news-value of the Rhineland, by working for him on "space-rates" for a month and producing material worth to him precisely £1. A little later, when the French had begun to move, he cabled offering me a handsome sum for "stories." But by that time I was under other obligations. Lord Northcliffe came to Cologne, had a nervous breakdown, and appointed me local correspondent there of *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*. That at least is the explanation favoured by a kind friend of my *Times* appointment, and I have no other to offer.

The day the news of the breakdown of the Paris Conference reached Cologne I did a thing quite unwarrantable for a "local" correspondent. I deserted "my" territory, took train to Essen and Düsseldorf, talked to representatives of the German mine-owners and workers and to the French military authorities, and telephoned to *The Times* over a column on the prospects. I knew that meant either a sharp rebuke for exceeding my instructions or congratulations.

I was lucky. Warm thanks came by 'phone, letter and telegram from the Editor, the Foreign Editor and others. I was asked if I could find time to go to Essen and do a "story," and was in the happy position of being able to reply at once via the telephonist:

"I have already been to Essen, got full material, and will telephone a further thousand words to-morrow."

Within a few days I had been promoted

from an obscure "local" to that of a well-paid "Our Special Correspondent." *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* had just parted company, and my new work involved, of course, severing connection with the *Mail* and handing over that work to my colleague, Sir Percival Phillips, on his arrival later in Essen.

"Among the population of the Ruhr generally," I wrote on 5th January, 1923, in *The Times*, after one of my extempore tours of the area, "there is an evident determination to offer such resistance as is in their power to any military advance and measures of economic control.

"A prolonged strike would be difficult to carry on successfully. The funds of the miners' unions are very low, and the cost of living here is so high in proportion to the men's wages that very little has been saved. What may be expected, however, is that, failing a strike, a ca' canny policy will be pursued by the miners. They will go down to the pits and will produce practically nothing. The first result will be unemployment throughout the industrial area, and with that the serious troubles of the occupying Power will start. In view of the temper of the miners it seems certain that, without the moral support of Britain behind her, France will be compelled to use a considerable military force. It is extremely unlikely that there would be any organized armed resistance, but among the rough, sullen-tempered and irritated Westphalian population it is only too probable that 'incidents' with French troops would occur and that the taking of hostages and severe reprisals would follow. Where this may end, with widespread unemployment and a collapsed mark, it is difficult to imagine. In British military circles the question of a possible with-



drawal of our forces from the Rhineland is naturally being discussed. Germans of all classes are very anxious as to our withdrawal. We are regarded as being a buffer between them and the annexationist schemes which, despite all official denials, they still attribute to France.

"The proposed customs barrier presents a further difficulty. The British being in occupation of the bridge-head of Cologne, but precluded from assisting France, how are the latter to avoid leaving the route of the traffic between occupied and unoccupied territory unguarded? The French solution is to envelop our frontiers with a line of military and customs posts in the Ruhr itself, which will link up with the Belgians at Düsseldorf and their own troops in Bonn."

The forecast proved a fairly accurate summary of what actually happened in the Ruhr.

"We have long said in the Ruhr," the Essen miners' leader told me a couple of days later, coining a phrase which was to be accepted all over Europe and America as the German miners' slogan for the struggle, "that you can do nearly everything with the bayonet—except pick coal. Herr Poincaré has yet to learn that the pick wielded by the free German workman anxious to do his share to fulfil his country's obligations is a better producer of Reparations coal than the bayonet. You can neither use it as a pick, nor can you sit down upon it and watch a miner perform an allotted task in the bowels of the earth."

Herr Schäffer, the Burgomaster of Essen (who on 11th January was to play a plucky and dignified rôle in the face of the French invaders and later to be sent, in failing health, to serve a

long term of imprisonment for loyalty to his superiors), told me of how the temper of the Ruhr workers was such that no German Government even had ventured to irritate Essen with a garrison before or during the war. He spoke of how this temper would combine with the complete lack of military accommodation for the expected invaders to exacerbate local feelings.

"If France comes," he said, "in defiance of all right and justice, we shall know how to preserve a dignified attitude of loyalty to our Fatherland, as the Rhinelanders have done since 1918."

One of the directors of Krupps, Herr Human, told me (in the presence of a witness cautiously provided, Herr Janssen, the "Press Attache" of the firm):

"This occupation is a tragic folly. If the people of France realized the terrific cost of these military operations to gain control of industries which, though they cannot believe it, are merely keeping their heads above water, they would realize the impossibility of the Ruhr move bringing any advantage to their country."

On 8th January the British military authorities were startled by a French request for railway facilities for moving troops through the British zone to Düsseldorf. I went myself that night to Düsseldorf, where I found many signs that the war had broken out again. Staff officers crowded into hotels where orderlies were coming and going in the drizzling rain. "*La grande advance*" had gone to everyone's head, and it was in the true spirit of the war-time attitude of the military

that a French general rebuked me for inquiring whether the march had begun.

"You are a British journalist, *mon ami*?" he said politely. "*Je m'en fiche de la Presse Britannique.*"

In the villages near the "frontier" corporals were chalking up billets in the familiar way, while field-kitchens sizzled in the rain and *poilus* gulped down hot soup from their mess-tins. Cavalry advance-guards moved forward in regulation formation of point, main-body, baggage and rear-guard, and threw out a line of outposts to protect the concentration. The lever of France's magnificent military machine had been pressed, "war" was already declared, and the "frontier" about to be crossed.

And on the other side the "enemy" (a few thousand police and five million civilians, mainly miners and steel workers whose output roughly equalled the whole of that of England) sat sullen, bitter, but defenceless, murmuring with the same spirit as the *ils ne passeront pas* of the deathless defenders of Verdun:—

"Their bayonets shall not hew our coal."

The leaders of the Ruhr were organizing the resistance day and night. Before even the "Plan 18" could strike at the heart of German industry its brains had been placed beyond its reach. On the night of 9th-10th January the *Kohlensyndikat*, the vast concern controlling the whole mining operations of the Ruhr, moved with bag, baggage, books and records from Essen to Hamburg. The French arrived on the 12th to

find its huge offices deserted and no clue whatever to enable them to understand or exploit the property they had seized.

"Zero hour" was kept a complete secret by the French military command. Dozens of special correspondents of American, British and other newspapers—most of them from Paris offices, expecting to witness and describe the triumph of "*La France Victorieuse*" over the mine-owners and miners of Westphalia—had crowded into Düsseldorf on 10th and 11th January. We all spent most of the night of the 11th-12th in taxi-cabs scouring Düsseldorf (in vain) for signs of the great advance, all information concerning which was refused us. I myself went to bed at 4.0 a.m. satisfied that we were safe for another twenty-four hours. I got up leisurely at ten to hear the chambermaid murmuring sullenly as she drew my blinds: "The French have gone to Essen."

It took five minutes to huddle into clothes and without bath, shave or breakfast to dash off on the trail of the invading army. My chauffeur had, fortunately, just the audacity which a journalist might wish himself to possess; his furious hooting caused the troops to clear a space hurriedly for what from its impetuosity seemed obviously a staff car. Long before the first cavalry and whippet tanks, with machine-guns moving in vicious arcs backwards and forwards, had reached the outer suburbs of Essen we had overtaken them and awaited them at the summit of Bredenay Hill.



*French soldiers bar the road at Essen Station*



*French tanks on a "Straf-Expedition" in Bochum*  
"WAR IN PEACE"

The French deliberately, the Germans out of the bitterness of their pent-up feelings, ensured the tense drama of the seizure of Essen. The majority of shops and houses all down the long hill of Bredenay leading in from Düsseldorf had drawn their blinds and shutters. Women avoided the streets. At the foot of the hill, in the square by the main post office, stood a large crowd made up almost entirely of men. As one stood amongst them one could feel the silent hatred and the rage hidden behind impassive faces like some mighty beast of the forest, bound helplessly and gagged, straining at the bonds until, at any moment, they might burst with a sharp crack, allowing a raging fury to fling itself into our midst.

Steely-eyed, their gaze fixed on infinity, a cyclist patrol in dark-blue uniforms with trench helmets and slung rifles convoyed the leading five armoured cars down the hill. The machine-guns pivoted round and back, a half-squadron of cavalry in light blue, their hands not far from the hilts of their swords, trotted with an outward gay nonchalance behind their leader, a fine, erect figure with snow-white moustache and tanned skin—one of those elderly cavalry captains who so often grace a French military parade—and the wild beast felt the bonds cutting into its flesh.

The silence was palpable. The Germans, in their bitter humiliation, strove to obey the last proclamation of their Government, whose authority these French troops were usurping, and control themselves. Here and there a man cursed savagely beneath his breath.

"God punish the pack of swine for this damnable outrage!" I heard one mutter.

Once or twice I heard a man gulping down a sob. And the clatter of horses' hooves over the cobbles, the jingle of accoutrements, the tramp of marching feet, marked the rhythm of this overture to the drama and tragedy of the next two years. It wanted but a spark for the conflagration to start before our very eyes, but German self-control just held. We journalists spoke involuntarily in whispers to one another, if at all, and never realized until afterwards that the tenseness of the scene had awed us into silence . . .

The General Post Office stood at the corner of the square where we were standing. A sharp word of command rang out as the cavalry approached it. With the precision of a parade ground movement, the officer leapt lightly to his feet, throwing the reins to his orderly. He drew his sword and ran lightly up the steps into the main hall, thronged with clerks coming and going on the business of their firms. Behind the officer went two troopers.

Out of nowhere two squads of infantry with fixed bayonets wheeled into position before the door, thrusting the crowd aside to clear the pavement. Two of them crossed bayonets on the steps, barring the exit; the Germans inside were prisoners, those outside forbidden to enter. Any who protested were roughly flung aside by the soldiers. Within five minutes the cavalry officer was sitting at the Postmaster's desk, and Essen was cut off from all communication with the outside world.

The main column, ignoring the scene at the post office, wheeled into the narrow street and bore down upon the Rathaus. Crash, crash, crash came down the shutters of the shops in the silence as the head of the column reached them—the only defence or protest which the weaponless and defenceless population allowed itself. German police on point-duty turned their backs on the scene and wandered up side streets lest their fingers might stray to revolver butts. The little square before the Rathaus filled with troops. A word of command—swords flashed into the air and a score of bugles sounded across the heavy silence the challenging, triumphant “General Salute” as General Rampon, Commander of the Fourth Cavalry Division and of the army of Essen, rode into the square.

The “attack” had been carried out precisely according to plan. Essen had fallen. It only remained to announce the fact to the head of the population.

A stout but agile *aide-de-camp* received a curt order from the General, sped up the steps of the Rathaus, and made his way to the Council Chamber. As I saw the cordon closing I had entered the Rathaus, and so was able to accompany the cavalry captain and see what followed.

In the Council Chamber sat four middle-aged German aldermen, impassive, stiff, officially ignorant that an armed enemy had taken possession of their city. The Frenchman saluted courteously. The others turned their heads and regarded him with chilly indifference.



"I wish to see the Chief Bürgermeister," he said, in pleasant German.

A little grey-haired man in glasses with whom I had discussed the situation two days before replied :—

"He is at lunch. I am his deputy, Bürgermeister Schäffer. Your business with us, pray?"

"General Rampon, commanding the French troops which are now occupying Essen, summons you to meet him at once at the door of the Rathaus," said the jovial-looking Frenchman a little less pleasantly.

The German did not quail.

"Pardon, Monsieur, I do not see callers at the door of the Rathaus. I can see your General in my office if he has business with me."

The stout captain saluted, withdrew and returned in ten minutes to say that the Chief Bürgermeister must be sent for. In twenty minutes Dr. Luther arrived, and sent his porter with a message into the square where the General and his troops waited stiffly. The champing of the horses' bits alone broke the silence.

"The Chief Bürgermeister of Essen is now in his office and can receive the French General."

In a few minutes the tramp of feet echoed down the long, stone corridor. The General and his gold-laced staff knocked at the door of the little German Mayor's office, while three files of infantry under a sergeant blocked the entrance to the room. In reply to the General's announcement that "by virtue of instructions received"

he had occupied Essen and installed certain controls, Dr. Luther, the Chief Bürgermeister, said that any action he might be compelled by the French to take would be the result of his country's inability to offer resistance to the armed invader.

"I protest," he concluded, "against the totally illegal application of military force to a disarmed and defenceless population."

Two coldly hostile but courteously restrained pairs of eyes looked into one another, a French military salute was returned with a stiff German inclination, and the opening of the struggle for the Ruhr had been officially registered.

In the gathering dusk, as I left the Rathaus, I saw a machine-gun detachment covered by an armoured car getting a Lewis gun into position on the steps of the Rathaus. The French watch on the Ruhr was set. And from a window of a second-floor above drifted the strains of the song which was shortly to go into banishment with a hundred thousand German patriots:—

"Fest steht und treu die Wacht.  
die Wacht am Rhein."

A song to meet Lewis guns—the folded arms of miners to reply to bayonets.

But one remembered that Lillibullero had sung a King out of three Kingdoms, and that the folded arms of the workers of Germany had broken the might of the officers' corps behind the Kapp *Putsch*.

## CHAPTER V

### CLINCHED

THE first three or four days of the occupation of Essen passed quietly enough. The infiltration of French troops into the Ruhr continued. One after another the great cokery and blast furnace cities "fell" — Gelsenkirchen, Dortmund and Bochum. A little beyond Dortmund the advance stopped.

The French, especially in Essen itself, behaved tactfully enough at first. In pursuit of the fiction that this was no invasion, but merely the dispatch of a "Commission of French and Belgian Engineers (with the necessary troops to ensure their safety)" to see that Germany's default in Reparations deliveries was made good, they kept their troops as far as possible out of sight.

We journalists had a hard time of it keeping pace with events. Neither the French nor the Germans intended to show their hand to us, but both were willing to off-load masses of propaganda which we did not want. The French propagandists were worse situated, for, having the weaker case, they were mostly occupied in parrying questions. The Germans had nothing but their plans for future resistance to conceal. The day-to-day happenings in their helpless and invaded country

could tell only in their favour, and they organized (despite French interference with communications) an excellent service of information.

The French system was more elaborate. In a requisitioned building in Düsseldorf M. Poncet, the mouthpiece of the *Comité des Forges*, established a "*Bureau de la Presse*" with the assistance of M. Valot. They had a branch establishment at the Kaiserhof Hotel in Essen, where a prince of gourmets, the genial M. Birnon, did his best to expound the virtues of the French "Ruhr policy" when he would far rather have expatiated on the merits of the Paris restaurants, which he had enshrined in a classic guide-book for the gourmet, and in which he believed so much more sincerely.

| In the hall of the Kaiserhof (which was requisitioned only in part at that time) we would meet at 11.0 a.m. and 6.0 p.m. Herr Brammer, a witty young man from the German Foreign Office, worked with tireless good humour among a crowd of largely hostile pressmen from all corners of Europe and America. Often he would conclude his news bulletin:—

"But, *meine Herren*, I see my colleague the enemy, M. Birnon, waiting across the hall to tell you what a liar I am, and to try to excel me himself, so *auf Wiedersehen!*"

Later, the German Press propagandists from the Foreign Office led the lives of hunted criminals. Dr. Zechlin (now head of the Press Section of the German Foreign Office) was arrested for doing nothing but give us the German view of events.

I still preserve a pencil-note from this gentleman who is now a power in Germany, written in French and headed "*Prison de Düsseldorf*," asking me to see that the French realized how reasonable his activities had been. M. Vallot was very good about this, and arranged for Dr. Zechlin to be merely expelled from Occupied Territory after only fourteen days in gaol. The original plan was to send him to prison for three months.

Another German Foreign Office young man, Dr. Müller-Heymer, succeeded, by an audacious piece of bluff, when the French *gendarmes* raided his room in Essen, in gaining time to escape to Cologne and safety under the British flag. A third, Dr. Willy Nöbel, lived for six months in the "island of peace" maintained by the British in Cologne. A certain Englishman in Coblenz assisted the French in a "fake" burglary of his room to try to get evidence with which to force the British authorities in Cologne to arrest him, but the latter declined to interfere with Nöbel's legitimate activities. His photograph was in the hands of every *gendarmerie* post which the French had placed round Cologne, and when he was eventually recalled to Berlin, he had to go by aeroplane to London and thence by boat to Hamburg—the route by which Berlin kept Cologne supplied with marks when the French began to seize currency whenever they could find it.

\* \* \* \* \*

On 14th January there was a half-hour general protest strike in Essen. The French forbade it,

but, except for essential services, it took place. There was a "two minutes' silence" at 11.0 a.m. and I saw a youth climb (under the nose of the sentries over French Headquarters at Essen) on to a window-sill and address the crowd. The "silence" interrupted him, and as it ended, someone softly began to sing that hymn — so often misinterpreted — in which Hoffman von Fallersleben exhorted his country in a time of national peril and dissension to put Germany, their country, *not* above all other countries, but "before everything in the world."

*"Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles . . . ."*

The crowd slowly, solemnly, meaningly, took up the strain. I looked at them, square-jawed, close-cropped, ugly as only the Westphalian of West Germans can be ugly and unattractive, and felt that here was a people taking the oath to suffer and hold on to loyalty, whatever the cost, until their bitter lot should be ended.

"I have just been warned," continued the young orator, after a pause, "of the danger of delivering this address. I hope you will all follow my example in rejecting such warnings."

As long as the invader profaned their soil, he went on, they must let him see in every glance and gesture that he was an enemy. Every French soldier, every officer, every sentry, must be made, individually, to read in the faces of the people of the Ruhr the intensity of their hatred—let no Frenchman ever say he felt at home at Essen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ten days went by, and the French made

no progress. Their daily deliveries of Reparations coal had ceased with their move into the Ruhr. Twenty-four thousand trucks formerly entered and left the area daily; after the invasion, Italy's Reparation coal went off as usual; France and Belgium got none.

General Denvignes summoned Fritz Thyssen, Krupp von Bohlen and other "magnates" before him and gave them a direct military order to deliver coal. They shook their heads, produced the order of their Government, transmitted through the *Reichskohlenkommission*, ordering no coal to be delivered, and affirmed their loyalty to the Fatherland.

French troops tried to stop trains taking coal to Unoccupied Germany; in an hour the lines were in hopeless confusion and the French had to release the trucks. French officers entered mine premises and asked to inspect them. Instantly the men's leaders ordered "down tools." The French withdrew and work was resumed.

Europe began to snigger. The French "got their backs up." On 19th January French troops seized the premises of the five groups of State-owned mines at Buer, Nesterholt and Recklinghausen. Two high officials, Von Reiffeisen and Dr. Ahrens, were arrested for refusing to disobey the German order not to load coke for France. The men instantly struck work, and did not resume until the French troops were withdrawn from the mine premises, to form a cordon around them.

On the same day the French began bank-

raiding. In "old" Occupied Territory their troops marched into branches of the Reichsbank, in some cases seizing and carrying off large sums of money. The clerks at once struck work.

On 21st January General Fournier came to the Rathaus at Bredenay and ordered six of the German magnates—Fritz Thyssen, Tengemann, Kesten, Olse, Wustenhofer and Spindler—to be brought before him. Once again they declared they could only obey their own Government, not that of the invader, and could deliver no coal. These men, the highest in the hierarchy of the Ruhr, were arrested on the spot, loaded into motor-lorries under the escort of *gendarmes*, rushed out of the city, and sent by train to Mainz, French military headquarters on the Rhine.

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It was a pleasant interlude to leave Essen, with its sullen, brooding atmosphere, and visit Coblenz, to say farewell to the American troops whom President Harding, choosing the wiser part, had ordered home on the French invasion of the Ruhr. In the hall of the fine building, which was General Allen's headquarters on the Rhine, looking straight across at the towering heights of Ehrenbreitstein Fortress, crowned with the Stars and Stripes, was a typical "Notice to troops":—

"Stop and look!  
Button up your overcoat!  
Button up your blouse!  
Stand up and act like a soldier!"

General Allen talked "peace talk" to me for



over an hour. He was full of forebodings, regretted America's withdrawal, and wished she could have intervened to restrain the "headstrong policy of the French." I was not so convinced of its "headstrongness." Floundering and blundering as the French clearly were in the Ruhr over details, the whole move had been premeditated years before.

The Germans saw the "Sammies" depart with deep regret. Despite a certain amount of "shooting up" of innocent civilians by military police in pursuit of delinquent "Sammy" gunmen, the Americans had handled their temporary subjects well, and had never treated them as "second-grade human beings." There had been much inter-marriage, and many German brides were preparing to say good-bye to the Rhine to accompany their soldier husbands to the States.

For the British it was a really grievous parting. Owing to her failure to ratify the Treaty, America had never had a vote on the Rhineland High Commission, but her influence had always been considerable, and her moral support of enormous value to Great Britain in her opposition to Franco-Belgian intrigue. On 24th January her troops marched out, leaving us to bear the brunt alone, with the French and Belgians permanently united against us. French troops gleefully replaced them.

I found the political atmosphere of Coblenz, as before, purely French. Lord Kilmarnock, the British High Commissioner, was a person of altogether different calibre to his predecessors,

Sir Harold Stuart and Sir Malcolm Arnold Robertson. He had no great force of character, was not particularly interested in the work, heartily detested all Germans, and sympathized with France. "My Ally, right or wrong," may be a good enough motto when an Alliance exists, but the Anglo-French Entente had long been dead in all but name—except in Coblenz. Some of the British officials took their cue wholeheartedly from "K.," as he was always called. He himself was wax, willing wax, in the hands of the wily M. Tirard. Pursuing a purely "French" policy, "K." was naturally no help to Lord d'Abernon in Berlin, and was openly at variance with his subordinate, Mr. Julian Piggott, at Cologne, for both the latter pursued policies which were firstly British and secondly "European," but never either French or German. The friction between the British at Cologne and the British at Coblenz, which had already come into existence with the early attempts of the French to inaugurate "Separatism," increased with every day of the Ruhr occupation.

The question of the independence of the British zone was settled illogically, but satisfactorily. On 22nd January Hayling von Lamzenauer, President of the Landesfinanzamt in Cologne, was arrested by French *gendarmes* with the "approval" of the British, taken to Bonn and expelled from Occupied Territory.

His offence was a refusal to disobey his Government's order not to hand over the revenue books of his area to the French. British sanction

of his arrest was an indefensible blunder, for he had not come into any sort of collision with us, and the French writ did not run in our territory. The French insisted that their prestige was involved, and the British gave way. General Godley, the British Commander-in-Chief, cabled the facts at length to London, and secured a definite promise that there should be no more "French" arrests in our zone.

The French now began to arrest important German Civil Servants all over their zone for obeying the orders of their Government, to throw policemen of the Ruhr into prison for declining to salute French officers, and to interfere afresh with miners and railway stations, provoking constant strikes, and generally showed that they were losing their tempers.

Officers began to use riding-whips on the crowds. In Essen I saw a boy, one morning, sobbing bitterly after being thrashed by a French officer for failing to yield the pavement to him, and in Recklinghausen the French pursued with their riding-whips into the theatre some men who had taken refuge there, stopped the performance of "King Lear," and drove out the whole audience.

The result of the court martial at Mainz of Fritz Thyssen and the other arrested Ruhr magnates was hailed by the Germans as a victory of German steadfastness in the face of French bullying. Terrific fines of from 500,000 francs downwards were inflicted on each of the directors, but the latter declared in open court :—

"You have no right to try to force us, contrary

to the Hague Conventions, to assist an invader. You will not break our resistance."

It was realized that at this stage the French were afraid to send such men to prison. Their journey down the Rhine back to Essen became one great triumphal procession. To the fury of the French, their train halted outside nearly every station, where huge crowds had gathered, and in voices thrilling with emotion cast Allied prohibition to the winds and sang "*Deutschland über Alles*," "*Die Wacht am Rhein*," and other patriotic melodies. At night crowds marched through Cologne singing the war-time jingle:—

"Siegreich wollen wir Frankreich schlagen."

("In victory let us smite France.")

changed, to spare British susceptibilities, into:—

"Siegreich wollen wir—wir dürfen es nicht sagen."

("In victory let us—well, we musn't sing it.")

At midday I stood on the parapet of Cologne Cathedral, near the station, and saw below me a sea of faces turned towards the train where Thyssen and his friends bowed at the windows to the wild cheering and singing. The British military police tactfully found work to do at the other end of the town. It was a spontaneous re-birth of German patriotism such as Stinnes had foreseen would accompany the occupation of the Ruhr, and such as neither French nor British bayonets could suppress at the moment of its occurrence, though hundreds of arrests in the French zone followed. Absorbed in the revolutionary struggle, the German man-in-the-

street had seen in these "hard-bitten" German magnates since 1918 only his exploiters; now he saw them again as fellow-Germans, thrust into the limelight and playing their part for Germany like men. With the songs of 25th January united Germany was re-born at the behest of France.

At Düsseldorf the crowds jeered at the French sentries until the latter opened fire—at first in the air. The directors' train reached Essen at 5.0 p.m. A trades-union delegation welcomed back the employers, while an uncontrollable crowd of miners cheered and sang themselves hoarse. Then the latter marched to French headquarters, threatening vengeance. French machine-guns, which were trained on the crowds, only evoked greater fury. It was touch and go when a squad of German "Green Police" marched up and planted themselves between the maddened mob and the machine-guns. All that evening no French officer or soldier could venture abroad without an escort of German police (a grotesque position!) and up till midnight, the city echoed with the defiant chants of the Germans.

Returning at 1.0 a.m. to my hotel (which was also French headquarters in Essen) in search of information, I became a spectator of an amusing local reconciliation. An American colleague of mine begged me to witness what he called "the blessed internationalism of alcohol." The night porter was ordered to bring up six dozen bottles of beer, and my colleague, in shirt sleeves at the reception clerk's desk, began opening them as to the manner born. All over the floor French soldiers slept on

straw sacks, ready to repel a German attack. My colleague had them roused, pressed beer on them and made the reluctant German night staff drink with them.

"Those *Schupos*" (German police), he declared, "are the heroes of the day. They alone have prevented shocking bloodshed, and I want them here."

Through another door he brought in the detachment which had been keeping the crowd and the Frenchmen apart. They stood in a knot, sullenly surveying the French while he filled their glasses.

My friend leapt on to the manager's desk. "*Poilus* and *Schupos*," he shouted, beaming upon them. "*Schupos* and *Poilus*, let the Press—and the Brewer—for once make peace instead of war. I give you the toast—and by heck, if you refuse it, I'll knock the glasses from your hands—France, Germany and the United States of America—drink!"

The men were parched and weary—and they drank—slowly at first, then greedily. My friend, perspiring in shirt sleeves, kept replenishing their glasses until, at last, he saw the moment had come to cry:—

"Shake all round—you're my guests, all of you, and I take no denial."

Grinningly and bashfully, they complied. The German police filed out to their posts and to their sullen hostility to the French. Within a fortnight the French had arrested and expelled every one of them. The weary Frenchmen dropped back on their straw sacks. The Ruhr battle re-commenced.

It is necessary always to bear one thing in mind in judging of the success or failure of the French Ruhr adventure—the complete divergence between the aims of the invasion as announced, and the real aims as proved by the policy steadily pursued by France on the Rhine from the moment of the signing of the Armistice. The openly admitted aim—that of compelling Germany to make good the small defalcation in Reparations timber and coal deliveries, which furnished the excuse for the occupation of the Ruhr—was clearly incapable of practical realization by such methods. For long before France could have seized these small quantities of Reparations material the total cessation of the daily deliveries must have made the debit balance increase in geometrical ratio. In course of time France might, indeed, prove able to wear down German resistance and even to squeeze out of the country slightly more than she had already committed herself to deliver. But as the Great War had shown, in such a mighty struggle as that on which the French had now entered the sheer destruction of economic values would yield vanquished, but no victors.

The French are entitled—though they have not, of course, found it politic to claim it—to have the Ruhr adventure judged from a different standpoint—that of an important move in their “splinter policy” towards Germany—their effort to break up the German Reich (as the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was broken up) into a conglomeration of small, weak states. Judged

from this standpoint, the Ruhr adventure is seen proceeding according to plan right from the beginning. German resistance, of course, was expected; the French allowed for it, and a whole set of draft ordinances and proclamations were ready to counter its various phases. As the result of many conversations with French officials who were "in the know" from the start, I am convinced that the directors of the invasion made two characteristically temperamental mistakes. They expected violence—sabotage and terrorism—to be resorted to fairly early, and on a large scale, by the Germans. They did not believe that the population would show the intense patriotism and readiness to suffer hardship and brutality for the sake of their country which developed during 1923 and 1924. They anticipated a breakdown of civilian morale, and counted on Communist propaganda terrifying both the mine-owners and the German Government into an early surrender.

The Ruhr adventure came several years—at least two years—too late. The consciousness of nationality which seemed extinct from the end of 1918 until 1921, had returned to the German people, despite its political, social and economic divisions, by 1923. The hammer blows of the French on the Rhine and Ruhr served only to weld amorphous sentiment into the hard steel of patriotism.



## CHAPTER VI

### " IN THE NAME OF SECURITY "

By the end of January the French measures to obtain control of the mines, steel works, railways, postal, telegraph and police services had begun to stifle industry and commerce in the occupied area. Like a creeping paralysis, the new measures spread eastward from the Rhine to the frontier of the Ruhr. During January troops kept trickling into the Ruhr, and behind them came French railwaymen "combed out" from the French State Railways. At the end of the month the coal blockade came down, cutting off the whole of Unoccupied Germany from its coal supplies. The French garrisoned the frontier railway stations from which the Germans immediately walked out. Generally speaking, of course, the coal blockade was effective, yet the Germans showed great ingenuity in running the blockade with small quantities of coal for a further six months.

At first a great many trains got through owing to the daring of the engine drivers, who approached the frontier stations with deceptive slowness, suddenly putting on full speed and dashing past the startled French sentries, into Unoccupied Germany, often followed by a stream of bullets. A more vigilant watch was kept by

the French, machine-guns were trained on the line and, finally, the metals themselves torn up. Yet still coal trickled into Unoccupied Territory, to the chagrin of the French. There existed a number of temporary lines constructed during the war which were marked on no map, and were, therefore, unknown to the invaders. It took them several months to locate these, and even then the Germans made use of private narrow-gauge lines leading from manufacturing premises into Unoccupied Territory. And when the last of these was closed, intrepid ex-military lorry drivers either ran the gauntlet of the French posts which were later established on the roads, or crept out, unobserved, by tiny lanes or even ploughed their way over fields and commons with their little load of "black diamonds" for the coal-starved Fatherland.

Germany was in the worst possible condition to face the French assault on her political, economic and territorial integrity. Her people were still filled with the bitter passions which any revolution leaves behind as a result of the altered status which such an event must bring in its train to so many individuals. Economic discontent and even Bolshevism were in the air. The countless humiliations of the Peace Treaty seemed to have broken the spirit of the people. Worst of all, the complete demoralization consequent on a steadily inflated currency had set in.

Against all this was the fact that both the German Government and the population at large

realized that the hour had come when the fate of the German Reich was to be decided. No phase of the war held even a fraction of the peril to the State which was involved in the strangle-hold which France now put upon her ancient rival in the struggle for the basin of the Rhine. The most deadly weapon, and the first to hand, with which the defenceless area could fight the French invader would, of course, have been the general strike, but it was a two-edged sword.

It was not only a question of the enormous expense to the financially hard-pressed country of supporting millions of workers in idleness ; there was the danger of an industrial uprising on a large scale being organized by Bolshevist agents among a million strikers. Against the wishes of the general population (whose bitter anger led the great majority of them to favour the most extreme measures), the modified attitude of "passive resistance" and "shifting strikes" had to be adopted. The Press and the Government spokesmen tried, not as French propaganda constantly alleged, to incite the people, but to calm them, and to maintain discipline. "Business as usual until you catch the glitter of a French bayonet or steel-helmet—then 'down tools' until the French withdraw," became the trades-union slogan. The invader was studiously ignored by everyone able to avoid direct contact with him, but wherever he appeared to give an order or exercise control he was met with a blank refusal and told to do his worst.

The French, the unquestioned military masters

### "IN THE NAME OF SECURITY" III

of the Ruhr, were "sent to Coventry" by the Germans with a completeness which roused their ire more and more as each week of chilling negation went by. There was little variation in the monotonous procedure which I watched at work dozens of times. A French officer, armed with a riding-whip and a military requisition form, and accompanied by a small escort, would enter a railway station and call upon the station master to be ready to forward a train which the French proposed to make up to carry "stolen" coal to France. The station master would reply that he was unable to disobey the orders of his Government, calling upon him to give no help to the invaders of the Ruhr. The officer would call out a file of men and fall them in on either side of the station master, who would be marched off to prison. Thereupon every railwayman in the station would cease work and stand about watching the French soldiers until ordered off. The same procedure would be followed with each subordinate as long as there was anyone left to take responsibility, and finally the French would be left in possession of a station which they could put to no use whatever, while the life of the German town in question moved back through a hundred years to the period before the advent of railways.

At first the Germans tried to help themselves out with special motor-lorry and motor-bus services, but the French developed a fatherly affection for their victims and forbade extra motor services on the grounds that the cruel

Reich was spoiling the roads for the local Germans.

As with the railways, so with the telephones. Wherever the French attempted to use the telephone and telegraph services for military purposes the Germans refused to take orders from them, were arrested and expelled. Thereupon the general public was reduced to the post as a means of communication. The French, of course, were more successful in utilizing telephone and telegraph lines for themselves than they were with the railways.

But in neither case did the Germans take this seizure of their property lying down. For months the French never knew, when they picked up a telephone receiver, whether the line would not prove to have been cut by some daring saboteur. In the railway station the points would be found jammed, the turn-tables thrown out of gear or the grease-boxes of the rolling stock filled with sand or grit. The death penalty was fixed by proclamation as the punishment for sabotage involving possible danger to life, and life-long imprisonment for other cases. French sentries were instructed to shoot immediately at anyone suspected of interfering with railways, telephone or telegraph lines or any other property which they had seized, and many Germans were killed or wounded.

The next sign of civilization to disappear from the Ruhr was police protection. On 16th February I was told that I should see an interesting ceremony in progress at Essen Police Headquarters.

I arrived to find the entire Police Corps under arrest and the building occupied by French soldiers. All the police arms were loaded up into lorries, and I saw the Deputy Police President and other important officials marched down the steps and placed under arrest in a motor-van, the progress of the Deputy Police President being hastened by a well-directed kick from a French sergeant's boot. The rank and file of the police were then released and again ordered to salute all French officers under penalty of imprisonment. Under these circumstances they refused to return to duty, and a few days later the entire Police Corps of the Ruhr was rounded up by the French and expelled. Bürgermeister were ordered to assist in recruiting a special police corps to serve under the French, and refused.

In Essen it became quite usual as one walked home night after night to hear the crash of shattered plate-glass, as criminals who had been attracted from all parts of Germany and neighbouring countries to the policeless paradise of the Ruhr made hay while the moon shone—or failed to shine.

In whatever direction the French turned they met with rebuffs. At one period they devoted much energy to courting the trades-unionists. "Decoy birds" in the shape of pseudo-Socialist trades-union leaders—M. Hof-Schiller was one—were sent from France to try to persuade the unionists of the Ruhr to abandon passive resistance "which only protected the masters' interests" and, in the name of the international solidarity

of labour, to assist the French Government to get German coal. The Westphalian unionists let these gentlemen from Alsace have their say, smiled grimly and shook their heads.

"We don't like these b—— rogues," a seventy-year-old German miners' leader told Sir Percival Phillips, of the *Daily Mail*, and myself at Bochum one day with a broad Scotch accent. The old man had spent twenty years in the Scotch pits, and was familiar, not only with the richest miners' vocabulary, but also with the policy of the *Daily Mail*.

"We'll be verra pleased to see that head-line in your newspaper, Sir Percival," he said, chuckling to himself, "b—— Frenchmen bite off more than they can chew in the Ruhr." Phillips made a most amusing "story" out of the old man, but I do not think the latter ever found that head-line.

When they failed with the trades-unionists, the French began to play with fire by encouraging the Communists, with consequences which will be described later. The French, by the middle of February, had become thoroughly exasperated and began bullying tactics. Every day brought its record of officials and private persons killed or wounded by the French, who now employed revolvers and bayonets with little or no provocation. German nationalist organizations began to retaliate, and there was frequent sniping at French sentries.

A boycott of the French was organized in several towns by hotels, restaurants and shops.

Any establishment which refused to serve a Frenchman was immediately closed by the French, and thus added to the desolate appearance of the paralysed industrial area. The French completed their ring around the Ruhr and began to levy customs duties, ordering German merchants to apply to them for import and export licences. Immediately the import and export of manufactured articles liable to duty stopped dead, but the factories continued to manufacture for stock until their premises were chock-a-block with goods. Hoping to break the resistance of the population when it was deprived of its leaders, the French made a point of giving illegal orders to mayors and political leaders; these were always refused, and the recipients were then arrested and either sentenced to imprisonment or expelled. Newspapers which encouraged the harassed population to hold out were confiscated and suspended. The French railwaymen brought into the Ruhr slowly began to send out coal trains to the number at first of three and four a day. Attempts to utilize the water-ways were foiled by German saboteurs, who sank barges, opened locks and pierced dams.

The French now began dispatching "Straf-Expeditions" to particularly recalcitrant areas, proclaiming a state of siege, closing shops and banks and issuing curfew proclamations forcing the inhabitants to be indoors at a very early hour in the evening. On the arrival of the "Straf-Expedition" at Gelsenkirchen on 17th February, headed by whippet tanks and cavalry, the French





not only seized all the money to be found in the Reichsbank and post office savings bank, but even formed a cordon across the main street and relieved passers-by of all the money in their pockets. This act of highway robbery was subsequently explained to be the result of the troops having misunderstood a badly-worded order "to seize all available German money," as the city had refused to pay a fine imposed on it by the French.

At Bochum, on 23rd February, the boycotting of Frenchmen in shops and restaurants brought down a "Straf-Expedition" on the city. French troops, supported by ten tanks, broke in on the sitting of the Town Council and arrested the Chief Bürgermeister and eighteen councillors. Motor-lorries laden with troops descended on the offices of the Chamber of Commerce, which had organized the boycott. After all furniture of value had been removed, the whole building was wrecked. Telephones were smashed, cupboards broken open and their contents hurled into the street. Paintings were run through with bayonets, the wine-cellar was ransacked, and the bottles which could not be removed were all broken. A six o'clock curfew was imposed and scores of people arrested for being out after that hour. The centre of the city was surrounded by a cordon of troops, and everyone kept out of it except residents furnished with special French passes.

It was in Bochum one sunny afternoon that another correspondent and I watched, unobserved, how the French sentries knocked off the hats of

all Germans who asked permission to pass the cordon, while their companions, basking in the sun before the guardroom, shouted with laughter and the officer of the guard smiled approval. Thus was France ensuring that the "war to end war" really made the world safe for democracy.

Wherever a German, under the influence of the desolation surrounding him, yielded in some way to the French, secret German "vigilance societies" wreaked prompt vengeance. If a restaurateur served French customers politely, within twenty-four hours half a dozen well-aimed half-bricks shattered his windows. Any girl seen speaking to a French soldier or officer would be waylaid some evening, gagged, and her hair cropped as short as that of the most nationalist German student. In one or two cases German youths followed the example set by the French population of towns in the military area in France and Belgium after the German evacuation, not only cropping the offending girls, but stripping them naked and dropping them into horse-ponds. Both sides were locked now in a life and death struggle, and there were no half-measures.

A tremendous fuss was made by the Germans concerning the employment of coloured troops in the occupation of the Ruhr. The agitation was rather artificial, because the Rhineland had suffered from the presence of coloured troops for over four years, and these negro and negroid garrisons still remained. Nevertheless, purely in order to avoid exciting the anti-colour sentiment

of America, the French gave a pledge that no coloured troops should be employed in the newly-occupied areas.

It was not long, however, before the Germans reported the presence of coal-black French negroes in the Ruhr, and I motored (by this time railway traffic had completely ceased, except for a couple of French military trains a day, throughout the heart of industrial Germany, and the grass was already growing between the lines) to Werden, where I found men of all shades and colour varying from near-white through "*café au lait*" and "*café noir*" to coal-black in possession of the local Rathaus.

The official French explanation of the presence of these men in the Ruhr, despite their pledge, was ingenious. The Seventh Colonial Regiment, to which the coloured men belonged, was, they said, a purely French regiment. It was recruited in St. Pierre and Martinique from all shades of the population, and all the soldiers, black or white, were French citizens. They could not, therefore, be described as "coloured troops," although, to the uninitiated they might appear as deeply coloured as any Senegalese. The men were moved back to the Rhineland a few days later.

A French officer gave me an amusing explanation of the real reason for their appearance at Werden, Velbert and Kupferdreh. It seems that their Colonel had received an order to send up "five hundred of your best men to the Ruhr, but only those of first-class character." The limitation apparently excluded the white privates,



*Wreckage in the Ruhr*



*The smash at Friemersheim*

Two of the many train wrecks under the French Railway *Régie*  
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and the honour of going to the Ruhr fell to the better conducted men of colour.

On 25th February the French committed another series of breaches of the Treaty by invading Unoccupied Germany along the Rhine and arbitrarily seizing Königswinter and a number of Rhineland towns in order to obtain full control of the railway line on the right bank of the Rhine. For this excursion coloured troops were landed from motor-launches to seize the municipal buildings.

To invest their seizure of railway stations with some show of right, and as a further step towards the separation of the Rhineland, the French proceeded on 1st March to consolidate their railway "victories" in a far-reaching ordinance of the High Commission. This established a Franco-Belgian "*Régie*" as the sole administrative authority over the German railways of the Rhineland territory occupied under the Treaty of Versailles. The ordinance was passed in the usual way. The French High Commissioner produced it and voted for it, his Belgian colleague supported him, and Lord Kilmarnock, for Great Britain, gravely remarked, "I abstain."

This and all the other illegal ordinances passed by the French and Belgians alone in connection with the Ruhr struggle were labelled "Special" ordinances, to distinguish them from those based on the Treaty and on the Rhineland Agreement, in which the British concurred. Most of them were productive of serious friction between the French and the British.

The Germans had become seriously alarmed at the news of the impending seizure of the entire railway-system and rolling-stock by the *Régie*. To the long daily list of accidents caused by the patient but largely unskilful attempts of the *Régie* to handle the property they had seized were now added more serious acts of sabotage. These were the results, according to the Germans, of the spontaneous action of desperate railwaymen, seeing arrest and expulsion staring them in the face, or to the indignation of local residents at French ruthlessness. According to the French, they were the work of secret German Nationalist organizations. While some of the cases of smashed points may have been the work of unorganized individuals, the series of bomb explosions, involving the wrecking of the permanent way for long stretches were certainly the work of daring young Nationalists. Several paid with their lives for their temerity.

On the night of 11th March the bodies of a French chasseur subaltern and a *Régie* station master were found near Buer. They had been shot by revolvers of a German type, but there was a considerable body of German evidence to suggest that they were shot by discontented French soldiers. I examined several of these German witnesses and was impressed by their evident belief in the truth of their own story. The French command, however, ridiculed the suggestion. A German detective, Burghoff, and an electrician named Wittershagen, were arrested by the French and later clubbed and shot to death; according

to the French officers to whom I spoke, this occurred in the course of an attempt to escape. I talked to Germans who swore to having heard for hours the groans and screams of these men, under the torture of beating with rifle butts, before two shots put an end to their torment.

The next morning a seven o'clock curfew was proclaimed in Buer and the neighbouring town of Recklinghausen, the Oberbürgermeister of Buer was arrested and General Caron, commanding the 32nd French Corps, announced that if another Frenchman was killed the Oberbürgermeister would be shot out of hand. After 4.0 p.m. the population was not allowed to walk on any pavement. To walk with the hand in the pocket was forbidden; no light was allowed to burn after 10.0 p.m.

The order to be indoors by seven had been issued on a Sunday after many people had gone off on excursions for the day. On their return, all-unwitting, they were beaten with riding-whips, struck with rifle butts, chased through the streets by French soldiers, and shot at. A workman named Fabeck was shot dead as he stood with his young wife waiting for a tram; among the injured were four persons seriously wounded. The prisoners here, as in countless other instances, were severely beaten, kicked and otherwise ill-treated. The German Chancellor spoke at length on 7th March of the thrashing of foot-passengers of all ages and both sexes by French officers with riding-whips in certain Ruhr towns, and there are many independent witnesses, some of them foreign

correspondents, to the sheer brutality of the French *régime* at this period, and the state of terror into which hundreds of thousands of unoffending German citizens were thrown.

Meantime, with praiseworthy patience, the French continued their self-appointed task of removing German coal. Slowly, they began to load a fraction of the huge stocks accumulating at the pit-heads (for the Germans still tried to keep the men at work so long as the French did not interfere). By 22nd March the occupation of the Ruhr was producing for the French, at enormous expense, a daily quantity of about 1 per cent. of the amount of coal which had been obediently delivered daily at their doorstep by Germany before that occupation. But the yield was steadily improving, while German resistance was becoming more and more costly to the State, which had to support the burden of growing unemployment.

Yet still there was no talk of surrender. Thinking Germans began to see that in this war of attrition the French were bound, sooner or later, to be victors to this extent—that they would be able to get appreciable quantities of coal out of the Ruhr. But Germany was not fighting with the prevention of this as her object. She was fighting for her territorial integrity, and for such economic independence as the Treaty of Versailles had left to her. Her task was not to prevent France from obtaining coal, but to make it so difficult and expensive for her to do so that she would be unable to use her mastery of the Ruhr as an



instrument with which to bargain over the future status of the Rhineland, and over the question of the *Comité des Forges* obtaining such permanent control of the Ruhr coal and blast furnaces as would have given France (to Great Britain's detriment) the hegemony in European steel production. Thus, in a sense, Germany was indeed fighting in the Ruhr, as she claimed, the battle of the British ironmasters.

## CHAPTER VII

### WAR IN PEACE

BLOOD was shed by French troops on the largest scale which occurred during the whole Ruhr struggle on Easter Saturday, March 31st. "Bloody Easter" was ushered in by fifteen workmen being killed or fatally wounded, fifteen severely wounded and thirty slightly wounded during the occupation of a portion of Krupps' great steelworks in Essen by French troops.

A commission had been sent under the escort of an officer and a machine-gun detachment of eleven men to seize a number of Krupps' motor-cars. In accordance with an agreement between the directors and the trades-unions, the factory sirens were sounded at once as a signal to cease work, and the men poured into the narrow street between two blocks of factory buildings. The military occupation and the hostile but peaceful protest demonstration in the streets continued from 7 a.m. until 11 a.m. The elderly French subaltern in charge of the party became more and more nervous, finally lost his head and ordered fire to be opened. A big proportion of his victims were shot in the back. Not the slightest injury was sustained by any member of his party.

These facts notwithstanding, no steps were

taken against the French officer or his men, but in the early hours of Easter Sunday three of the Directors of Krupps'—Doctor Bruhn, Herr Hartwig and Doctor Osterlein—were arrested by the French.

It was a delightfully simple way of confusing foreign opinion, of course, to imprison men whose workmen had been guilty of being shot down by French troops. They were later joined in prison by the head of the firm, Herr Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, who long after learning of the fate of his co-directors came from safety in Berlin to Essen on a French summons to appear as a witness, and was thereupon arrested. A cynical answer was returned by General Jacquemot, the French Military Governor of Essen, to the protest of the man who was for the moment acting Bürgermeister of Essen (pending, of course, being expelled to join the string of his predecessors in office across the "frontier" of Occupied Territory) calling on the French to take steps to punish those responsible for the shooting.

"Your demand," he said, "was anticipated by us and granted before it was made; Krupps' directors have already been arrested."

Only one journalist, an American, was in Essen when the shooting occurred. The rest of us dashed off in motor-cars (train-traffic was still non-existent save in the vivid imagination of the French *Régie* time-tables) from various other centres to the scene of action. At this time no journalist could live for long in the Ruhr itself, cut off from telephonic and telegraphic communication with his paper. Most of us selected Düsseldorf,

French "G.H.Q.," for the Ruhr operations, and were allowed by the French to use their military lines. Sir William Beach Thomas, of *The Daily Express*, George Renwick, of *The Daily Chronicle*, and I preferred Cologne as a base. It was an hour farther off the Ruhr than Düsseldorf, but normal "civilian" telephone and telegraph communication was unimpaired. The British refusal to allow the French to pursue their schemes in their area made Cologne an island of peace, with the conveniences of the twentieth century unaffected in a sea of surging battles and medieval conditions. I preferred not to be indebted to the French for permission to use their military lines, but to put on calls or hand in cables like any other member of the public at the ordinary telegraph office in Cologne. But it was exhausting work motoring off day after day to the Ruhr, collecting information, and then pounding back to Cologne at night in a rickety car over shocking roads, perhaps writing a "story" for the telephone against time with portable typewriter or pen by the aid of a candle held in one hand as it generously spattered grease over the "story," the car and one's clothes indiscriminately with every bump of the vehicle.

Krupps' devoted their organizing genius from the start to exploiting the victims of the French. The factory doctor met me with full details of the wounds set forth in a typed document, and an invitation to examine the dead bodies lying in the morgue. By the evening photographs of their terrible mutilations were pressed upon me.

I talked to wounded survivors and to such of the directorate as were not under lock and key. The French were obviously embarrassed, but very voluble, about a plot between Krupps' directors and the expelled police, who were supposed to have come back from Unoccupied Territory in mufti and to have stirred up Krupps' men with the connivance of the directorate to attack the French.

This official French version was described by Voigt in the *Manchester Guardian* as "a masterpiece of naïve mendacity." The trades-union leaders, despite liberal doses of French propaganda designed to incite them against the firm, were quivering with fury against the French and angry at the imprisonment of their employers. Economic differences between capital and labour, as Hugo Stinnes had foreseen, vanished temporarily before the wave of patriotic resentment.

The funeral, although obviously stage-managed by the Germans, was the most impressive which I have ever had to attend. The directors spared no expense to make it a solemn pageant of silent protest against the ruthlessness of France. They were quite entitled to do so, of course, and would have been foolish not to make as much capital as possible out of their excellent case. But there is something extraordinary unpleasant to an Englishman in seeing dead bodies and broken-hearted relatives exploited to support any political cause, however righteous.

Twelve oaken coffins flanked by juniper trees lay in state in the great marble hall of Krupps', which had been converted into a *chapelle ardente*.

One of the dead men was a miner, and eight of his comrades in the ceremonial dress of the craft—tight-fitting, soot-black tunic and trousers and white plumed hat, with a lighted safety lamp in the hand—formed the guard of honour. Seventy thousand employees of the great firm filed out after the bodies past the smoking censers above the gates of the factory to the military cemetery, where the dead were buried amidst Germany's soldiers who had fallen in battle. Herr Krupp von Bohlen (who had not yet been arrested) took farewell of "our beloved comrades who have died for Germany's freedom and honour." The interment furnished the unique spectacle of a high Roman Catholic dignitary, a prominent Lutheran pastor and a Communist free-thinker in red tie holding funeral orations from the same platform. Six Communists carried a gigantic floral Soviet star with hammer and sickle as a tribute from the Party to the dead Communist.

First the priest officiated over his dead, then the pastor over his, the Communists standing quietly by uncovered. Then their free-thinker orator spoke, saying :—

"We do not blame the French officer or the simple men who shot down our comrade like a dog. We blame the greedy financiers of Paris and Brussels who planned the political murder of the Ruhr occupation. We cannot be tricked by priests and pastors into consoling ourselves with impossible fairy tales of future life. Our comrade has gone for ever—he lives on only in the example he set us when alive."

Priest and pastor flushed, but listened quietly to this speech, but I saw the relatives of other victims sobbing, their hands to their ears as they turned away.

"Such horrors prove there is no heaven and no God!" shouted the Communist orator, and the burly father of one of the other dead boys cried aloud: "I cannot listen to this man!" This reached the speaker's ears, who tactfully concluded just in time to avoid a general outburst.

The whole funeral was an amazing exhibition of German organization and self-discipline. In the whole of the Ruhr there was not one policeman at this time, but the hundred thousand spectators and seventy thousand mourners kept order amongst themselves. The French were tactful enough to keep out of sight. I did not see one French uniform all day.

Krupps' did not miss the chance of pictorial propaganda. They had photographs of the procession ready before the funeral was over, and so enabled me to score a photographic "scoop" for *The Times*.

A month later the Krupp directors were tried before a military court at Werden. With these men—some of the most influential persons in Germany—were marched into court four of their workmen, charged with them with "conspiracy" against the French.

What this travesty of justice really amounted to has been given away by Sir William Beach Thomas, in his *A Traveller of News*, where he related how the French propaganda office

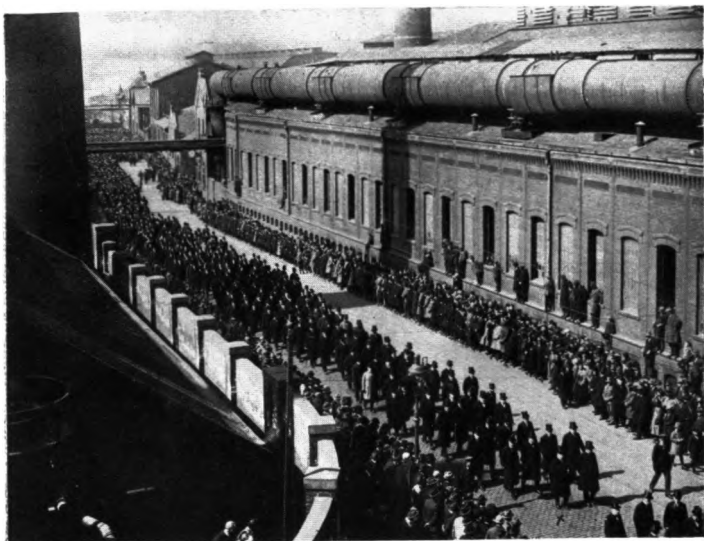
in Düsseldorf saved him a troublesome motor trip to Werden by obligingly handing him a list of the sentences which Paris had decided should be imposed on the directors, several hours before they were even found guilty.

Naturally not a shred of evidence proving anything against the directors could be produced. Nervous and conscious of the enormity of their action, the French placed three military cordons around Werden, and even with French passes it proved extremely difficult to penetrate them, the soldiers on duty having been worked up to a state in which nothing, even a mass uprising of Germany to rescue the Krupp directors, seemed impossible.

The prosecuting officer made a great many wild suggestions of conspiracy, without producing the evidence. The farce was completed in three days. Krupp von Bohlen, Osterlein and Hartwig were each sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment and fines of one hundred million marks. Bruhn got ten years. The trades-union leader, Müller, got six months, and four absent directors were sentenced *in contumaciam* to twenty years each.

Eight months later, when the Ruhr industrials had generally agreed to resume coal deliveries to the French on the cessation of "passive resistance," the heinous crimes of these directors were promptly forgotten and they were released. The men who had been denounced with such passion by the French as conspirators and murderers of workmen whom they had incited to force French machine-guns to fire, afterwards callously looking on the





*The Krupp tragedy*  
Funeral of the workers killed by the French



*The sequel*  
Krupp von Bohlen, the Kaiser's friend, before the French court  
martial which awarded him fifteen years' imprisonment {130

slaughter from the windows of their boardroom, were smilingly invited to seat themselves at the conference table with their accusers. The *Comité des Forges* set no value on the completion of the sentences, once their political and economic object had been obtained. And the Krupp directors themselves emerged from prison to shake hands with their persecutors and arrange details of contracts and deliveries with them.

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I talked to one of the imprisoned directors after his release at a time when he was actually taking part in such negotiations.

"These," he said in tones as cold and as hard as Krupp steel itself, "are business matters, and we are business men. My imprisonment, however, was a personal experience. You know my position in this great firm and in Germany, and you can imagine what it meant for me to be under the orders of a French N.C.O., who was not always sober and, when drunk, abusive and brutal. Each of the 250 days of my imprisonment taught me something. I had time for reflection, and am unlikely to forget anything. Nor, I think, is my son likely in days to come to forget or forgive the treatment to which his father was subjected."

Among the "invisible debits" of the Ruhr occupation France has to enter the creation of similar sentiments amongst probably a considerable proportion of the 140,000 deportees and the thousands who were sentenced to fines and

imprisonment for nothing worse than loyalty to their own country during its invasion in times of peace by hostile troops.

Each of these victims had families and friends, and these friends and families had friends again. None of them was forgotten by German propagandists of reaction and *revanche*. Evictions of tenants of whole blocks of railwaymen's dwellings by Spahis and other coloured troops, the processions of weeping women pushing perambulators and carrying the meagre bundles of sixty kilogrammes of household effects which they were allowed to take into exile to join their deported husbands, made a bitter record in the memories of many beside the actual victims.

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For a long time the French had coquetted with the Communists in the hope of scaring the employers. No obstacle was put in the way of Communist propaganda, even that of a violent nature, and the mushroom growth in unemployment, the absence of the police, the increasing misery resulting from the disappearance of civilized facilities in everyday life, the terrible poverty consequent on inflation, and, above all, the growing food shortage due to the disappearance of regular trains, acted as a forcing-bed for discontent. The "Majority Communists" soon began to take the line that French imperialism was too great a foe of the proletariat for the Communists to have any truck with it, even to fight their natural foe, the German capitalist. But a big section of

the most desperate Communists and Syndicalists took advantage of the universal toleration of the French (and in several areas of their secret and even open encouragement) to rouse the workers to violence.

The French calculation was that while the German employers with no police or troops were more or less at the mercy of the Communists, they themselves could always call off the Communist dog with their troops when he had sufficiently terrorized and damaged German capitalists. Communist "Centuries" wearing green shirts were recruited on a big scale, and found that there was no undue fuss made by the French about their getting possession of a limited quantity of firearms.

In May the Communists put forward a "direct action" programme. Thousands of men came out on strike at Dortmund, Gelsenkirchen and elsewhere, obtaining a good deal of popular support for their demand that a number of mines should be handed over to the workers by their promises to reduce drastically the price of food. At Dortmund on 22nd May Communist "Centuries," after marching through the town in military formation, engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with a small force of special constables who were endeavouring to substitute the banished State police. Several were killed and many wounded on both sides. The French troops of occupation looked on calmly at the disorders which, although they had removed the police, they made no attempt to suppress.

On 24th May disorders at Gelsenkirchen had

reached the pitch of a successful Bolshevik revolution in miniature. I arrived there at midday to find the "Red Army" in full possession of the town and no law running except that of the Communists. The previous evening Communist-organized mobs had invaded the markets and forced dealers to reduce prices by one-third. Armed with cudgels, lengths of gas-piping and revolvers, the mob then captured the railway station, killing a number of special constables and members of the fire brigade.

On my arrival my car was immediately stopped by desperate-looking pickets wearing red brassards and armed with clubs. I was sent under escort to the Bolshevik commander, who had his headquarters in the shattered and burnt-out Police Presidency, which had been captured after fierce fighting the night before. The whole building and the street for a couple of hundred yards in either direction were filled with wreckage. Half-burnt documents, tables, chairs, washing-basins, cupboards and what had once been telephones were littered in every direction. One "Red" officer pointed out with pride a telephone dangling aimlessly in the tangle of useless telegraph wires outside.

The "Red" leader, a huge man six feet tall wearing a truly Bolshevik black beard, received me amiably enough amidst the wreckage on which his hollow-cheeked, begrimed guards were lying, but I felt that the case called for diplomacy. I have never yielded to the temptation to represent myself as correspondent of another

paper, as a colleague on an extreme anti-German newspaper did on several occasions in order to obtain special information from the Germans as "correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*," but I came within an ace of doing so that morning. Germanizing the pronunciation of "*Times*," I told the Red Commander that I was the correspondent of that great British proletarian organ, *Der Teemex*, investigating the exploitation of the under dog in the Ruhr by the German capitalist and bourgeois.

I am ashamed to say that he believed me and became thoroughly genial, hacking me off a lump of odoriferous sausage and breaking off a corner of black bread which I accepted with gratitude, having had nothing since an early start from my head-quarters in Cologne. He made out a very reasonable case for publication in *Der Teemex* (which *The Times* published), saying :

"Hunger hurts more than a bourgeois revolver bullet or police truncheon. We are ashamed of this picture of destruction, but the fault lies with the profiteers and their protectors who drove starving men to this. Prices have risen 125 per cent. since 1st May, while our wages remain stationary. We demand a further 50 per cent. increase in wages immediately and strict control of prices. We have paid for to-day's victory with nine comrades killed and sixty wounded."

Many of the leaders with whom I talked claimed the French troops as the friends of the Communists. One alleged that the French had disarmed the citizen police corps (special constables) and fired on the fire brigade during the fighting of the

previous night. This was later confirmed to me by several witnesses from the middle classes who had also seen the mob which was plundering the wrecked shops cheer the French troops as they drove by in a lorry without interfering.

In the streets there was a general air of Bank Holiday, except for occasional platoons of Communists carrying red flags. The Chief Bürgermeister, who had, of course, been deposed, was able to effect a compromise by persuading the Communists to share the police work with other trades-unionists. He told me that the "Reds" had at least tried to put a stop to indiscriminate plundering, but they were forcing shopkeepers to sell their stocks at prices which meant that they could not possibly re-stock. No supplies whatever were brought in to the "Red" market, so that starvation threatened the population within a few days. I returned to my bearded friend and obtained from him a special passport allowing me to be out after 10 p.m. For the population in general the Communist order was to close their front doors at that hour and not to open them until 5 a.m. Another proclamation forbade entirely the sale of alcohol, and yet another stated that plunderers, *agents provocateurs*, and spies would be shot out of hand.

Next day I attended a meeting of the "Reds" at their head-quarters. A dozen collarless, unshaven men, several with blood-stained bandages round their heads, sat at a table on which lay several yards of sausage, and black bread cut into equal lengths, one of which was picked up by each

delegate (and by the correspondent of *Der Teemez*) on entering.

It proved a stormy meeting. There were no bloodthirsty expressions of opinion; it was a conference of hungry, somewhat fanatical and mainly well-meaning men, with no idea of what to do with the power suddenly placed in their hands, and obsessed by an overmastering fear of reprisals in the shape of police or a *bourgeois* force armed with machine-guns and bayonets falling upon them at any moment. "All that we demand at present," one responsible leader said to me, "is the control of police and foodstuffs by the workers throughout the Ruhr."

Communism in the Ruhr reached its zenith on this day in Gelsenkirchen. The French, who were merely giving the Communist bogey a "try-out," found themselves compelled by the alarm which their policy created abroad, especially in Great Britain, to alter their tactics, and bit by bit *bourgeois* control was restored. Nevertheless, the spectre of plundering by starving mobs was always in the background for the population, and proved a big factor in bringing about the final cessation of German passive resistance.

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On 25th May the Germans were shocked to learn that the French had actually carried out one of a number of death sentences passed by their military tribunals. A Nationalist shopkeeper, a member of one of the German "Feme" organizations, Albert Schlageter, was taken from his cell at 4 a.m., put up against the wall of Düsseldorf



cemetery and shot. He had been informed a bare hour before that there would be no reprieve.

The execution of Schlageter proved excellent propaganda for the German Nationalists. His offence (sabotage on the railways) was everywhere regarded as purely political, and Nationalist bitterness was stimulated. When his body was subsequently removed for burial in Unoccupied Territory it was treated as that of a national hero. At every station *en route* (once the frontier of Unoccupied Territory had been crossed), worshipping crowds assembled to pay a last tribute as the body passed and the floral tributes were innumerable. His grave became for many months a place of pilgrimage at which to register vows of vengeance on the French.

Opinion in Occupied Territory, however, was less unanimous, a large section of the population feeling that sabotage provided only a minor obstacle to the French, while it exposed those areas where it was attempted to ruthless reprisals. By the device of seizing prominent German citizens and forcing them to spend their days and nights travelling backwards and forwards as hostages under arrest in the guards' vans of French *Régie* trains, the French soon strengthened the general feeling of the occupied areas against the folly of violence being opposed to such overwhelming military force.

A new proclamation extended the death penalty to sabotage committed in any industrial works which had been seized by the French.

Throughout June German civilians and, more

rarely, French sentries were shot dead in one district or another nearly every night. At Buer a shot which was one night fired without effect at a sentry resulted in a very severe curfew order. Throughout the sweltering days of a heat-wave every citizen had to be indoors with every window closed by four o'clock in the afternoon. After that hour no lights were allowed, nor might anyone show himself at a window. The town became outwardly a habitation of the dead, indoors a collection of as many stifling hells as there were houses, from 4 p.m. each afternoon until 8 a.m. next morning. The increased activity of the extreme Nationalists, which was a direct reply to the shooting of Schlageter, took a new form at the beginning of July, when an infernal machine exploded in a Belgian leave-train near Duisburg, killing and wounding 25 men.

At the urgent request of the French Press Bureau, which was horrified at my failure to appreciate at its true value the French achievement in the Ruhr, I undertook a journey by *Régie* train early in July. The service was bad almost beyond belief, yet considering the difficulties with which the French were confronted, it did great credit to the technical efficiency of their railway engineers. They had succeeded after six months in running about one-tenth of the normal number of trains, and in some cases even managed to approach the normal speed.

But everywhere decay and destruction were noticeable. Damaged locomotives and trucks which the *Régie* could not repair crowded

the sidings. In the goods yards trucks stood loaded as they had been when the French had seized the stations six months before. At Godesberg, I noticed a truck which had been loaded with sacks of corn on the day the French first seized the line. In the meantime the corn had sprouted merrily, and now stood a foot and a half high, giving every prospect of an excellent harvest in the autumn. The rusted metals on many sidings had disappeared beneath a luxuriant growth of weeds and grasses. The system of signals and automatic locking points had been replaced by a man with a red flag which, as the train left the station, was planted in the permanent way.

Although the *Régie* refused all liability for injury to passengers and damage to goods, it was beginning to get a certain amount of support from an unwilling and sullen public, compelled either to patronize the trains taken from them by the invader or stay at home. The French admitted the loss of a million francs on the *Régie* in June alone, despite the fact that fuel, rolling stock and premises had been seized without payment. Faced with the figures of such reckless destruction of wealth, it was no wonder that many serious Germans began to ask whether the senseless struggle could not be ended by an armistice. But the French, filled with the idea of a second glorious victory over Germany, were not yet ready for such talk, while the majority of Germans outside Occupied Territory, if not any longer of those inside it, still cried: "A fight to a finish—better an end with terror than terror without end."

Throughout July and August the morale of German resistance continued to deteriorate under the influence of economic distress. Sporadic plundering of shops, rioting and the seizure of factories by strikers occurred in many industrial areas in Rhineland as well as in the Ruhr. Communist propaganda increased, and gradually the struggle in the mines and steel-works took on a triangular aspect as the Communists succeeded in working up feeling against the industrialists, whom they accused of preparing to sacrifice the workers who had stood by them under such terrible conditions by striking a contemptible bargain with the French *Comité des Forges*. Foodstuffs became dearer and shorter. Around the bigger centres there was a return to the war-time practice of hungry housewives travelling into the country to acquire potatoes and other agricultural produce, which they carried home in rucksacks if they were able to avoid the hungry "potato footpads" who were always liable to spring upon them from ambush.

The Belgian military authorities proved as benevolent towards the Communists as the French, and declined either to intervene or to allow the police to be reinforced, even when food and the clothing shops were sacked by armed mobs. Towards the end of August the "ca' canny" strike in the mines organized by the Communists achieved such success that the "united front" of capital and labour was temporarily broken and a lock-out of 40,000 miners declared by the employers. Within a few days it was brought to an end, and the "united front" patched up.

One of the greatest tragedies of the Ruhr struggle was the milk shortage, due to inflation, low wages, unemployment, the breakdown of transport and the existence of the barrier between Occupied and Unoccupied Territory. Infant mortality began to rise, and municipalities found themselves helpless in face of the chaotic currency conditions consequent on the seemingly endless daily collapse of the mark and on the fact that the French authorities seized money wherever they could find it in quantity, irrespective of its ownership.

It was at this juncture that I came across a great-hearted American citizen, Mr. James A. Causey, of Denver. It was Paul Schäffer, the brilliant special correspondent of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, who brought us together in Essen, because Causey had expressed a wish to meet the author of the Ruhr dispatches then appearing in *The Times*. Like any other wealthy American, Causey was amusing himself with his family on the Riviera when a chance acquaintance, an Italian, who had just come from the Ruhr, told him of the misery of the population under the French régime.

It was the story of the children's sufferings which touched Causey's heart. He "dumped" his family in pleasant surroundings and took the next train to the desolation which had once been the busiest industrial area in Europe. Keeping out of politics and avoiding taking sides, he made a painstaking investigation, and decided that there was no time to be lost. He cabled a dozen other

Americans as rich as himself, not asking them for help but calling upon them confidently in the name of humanity to place enormous sums at his disposal without interest, for the eventual return of which he pledged his word.

He met with neither refusal nor excuse, but obtained his money. Then he went to the French and secured their promise that under no conditions should any of his funds be confiscated. After that he called a series of meetings of the Bürgermeisters and their substitutes, and organized with them a system of "revolving credits" to be used for the purchase of foodstuffs—primarily milk for the children—and obtained safe conducts from the French for these supplies. His loans were returned in dollars every week or so by the municipalities and re-issued to them.

No one can tell how many hundreds or even thousands of lives Causey saved by his unobtrusive, practical and business-like activity in the Ruhr. Practically no one outside Germany knows of what he did, for he was anything but an advertiser. But every cent of the money was eventually returned by the municipalities, and the name of Causey is still one to conjure with in Essen and the other industrial centres of the Ruhr.

Throughout the long days and quivering nights of an exceptionally sultry August German spirits continued to flag. The French stranglehold was as merciless as the famous cartoon in *Le Journal* of 28th January had promised that it would become. This picture, entitled "*Quand Vous Voudrez*," depicted a virago France looking contemptuously

over her shoulder at the furnaces of the Ruhr, holding in both hands a cord called *La Cordon Douanière* with which she was preparing to strangle the writhing creature before her (the Ruhr population) at any moment. The victim was still twisting and turning, gasping for breath, and putting up an ever-weakening resistance, but the end was obviously near. It came on 27th September, when the Berlin Government cancelled the decrees enjoining passive resistance on the population.

By this time the frontier between Occupied and Unoccupied Territory had been hermetically sealed. Every notable leader in every walk of life had been deported. Newspapers had either ceased publication or become colourless and emasculated sheets, unable to print anything freely about the one question in which their readers were interested—the occupation of the Ruhr. Not only the Reichsbank money, but also the local currency (printed by municipalities and factories when the French had succeeded in stopping the smuggling-in of national currency) had become almost unobtainable.

Heroic expedients such as the printing of notes by secret presses hidden in the galleries of mines far below the earth had been resorted to in vain. The fines inflicted on towns and villages with the slightest excuse (or without one) and collected by the confiscation of public and private property had become terrific. Timber had been cut down indiscriminately, ruining many years of painstaking forestry, and carried off to France ;

considerable quantities of coal and coke were beginning to move slowly westwards and an attempt was being made by the French to run two or three cokeries with Polish and renegade German labour. The morale of the commercial community was beginning to break down and there were sporadic applications for French import and export licences.

The most serious factors which had to be considered by the Germans in taking a decision were the ripening of the French plans for the disruption of the German Reich and the complete breakdown of Germany's finances, which made it clear that by the end of September there would not be a *pfennig* available for the support of the suffering population of the Occupied Area or for the general financing of resistance.

In the middle of September Professor Moldenhauer, of Cologne University, who became Finance Minister in 1929, and who was at that time a prominent member of the Volkspartei and high up in the councils of Hugo Stinnes and the other great industrialists, told me that in the Ruhr it was felt that the leaders of the country had to face three possible alternatives.

Firstly, they might form an economic and political alliance between a dominating France and a vassal Germany, with a possible addition of Russia later on. Secondly, Germany might decide to declare formally that the invasion of the Ruhr had torn up the Treaty of Versailles and that a state of war existed between France and Germany. There was no idea of offering armed



resistance, but Germany would in this event cut off all connection with the invaded areas, stopping food supplies, leaving France in the position of a belligerent country forced to feed the densely-populated area herself.

Those who supported this last scheme reckoned with the possibility of a French extension of the Occupation and the probable annexation of the whole or part of the area. They argued that in any case there was no hope of stopping the French disruptive schemes, and that it was better for the Reich to go down with her colours nailed to the masthead. The sequel was naturally to be open or secret preparations for a war of liberation.

The third alternative was capitulation by the unconditional withdrawal of the Reich decrees calling for passive resistance. This involved the danger of the break-up of Germany, civil war in the Ruhr, resulting in a short-lived triumph of the Communists followed by a Fascist reaction, and finally a ruthless suppression of disorders by the French and the setting up of a dummy Rhenish-Westphalian Republic under French control.

It was decided in the end to accept the risk involved in the third alternative, and on 27th September the Ruhr credits were stopped and the passive resistance decrees withdrawn unconditionally, after all efforts to persuade the French to grant simultaneously a general amnesty to prisoners and allow the return of 140,000 hapless deportees had failed.

Germany's official surrender made surprisingly little difference in the Ruhr. The workers were

bewildered. Many trades-union leaders told me that resistance would be continued without official support ; others blamed Berlin for not having abandoned a hopeless struggle earlier. Fritz Thyssen and other big industrial leaders attached far less importance to this decision than to the problem of restoring order to the industrial chaos, and getting their men back to work before the winter presented the Communists with their supreme opportunity.

On 5th October Herren Stinnes, Vögler and Klöckner, after visiting Herr Krupp von Bohlen in Düsseldorf prison, opened negotiations with General Degoutte concerning the resumption of work. The five-hour conference was anything but a friendly one. It marked, in fact, the transfer of the Franco-German struggle from the street, the railways and the mines to the conference table. The industrial leaders, attacked in the rear by Communism, with French Separatist plans undermining their position, had to face the frontal attack of the *Comité des Forges*, which was designed to make the Ruhr mines and factories an industrial colony of a France whose military frontier would extend to the Rhine.

On 16th October I obtained from Herren Stinnes, Klöckner and Vögler the exclusive announcement of their plans. On the afternoon of that day, following another abortive conference with General Degoutte, they held a private meeting, at which it was decided that unless the French dropped their demands aimed at the permanent control of Ruhr industry, they would

really choose the end with terror rather than terror without end. They unanimously agreed to inform General Degoutte at the next meeting that the industrialists in the Ruhr, with every wish to co-operate, saw no possibility of raising money to meet their huge wages bill until the French modified their conditions, and that therefore every mine, blast furnace and cokery in the area would be closed down and all the workers turned on the streets at one stroke. That the threat was not mere bluff was shown by the action of the French, who changed their tone at the next meeting and adopted the policy of "separate agreements."

The battle across the conference table continued for the greater part of October. The Germans held out for a collective agreement with France, but she insisted on her policy of *divide et impera* by refusing to consider anything but agreements with individual branches of industry, in which these were compelled to take over directly a share of the reparation liabilities formerly assumed by the Reich, which had been responsible for paying firms for deliveries made to France on its behalf. M. Poincaré saw elections approaching, and required something with which to dazzle the eyes of his countrymen. By the beginning of 1924 he had over forty new "productive pledges" in the shape of separate agreements with various branches of German industry. The industrialists who concluded them realized that their fulfilment over a long period was quite impossible, but the alternative, as the French simply continued to stifle production by

huge duties and the refusal of import and export licences, was immediate economic starvation.

The French local triumphs never bore the stamp of anything approaching permanency. Gloom and depression were all that the population of the Ruhr could expect each day to bring, save the occasional outbreak of violence by starving and desperate men. Slowly and creakingly the disused and rusted machinery of production began to work again with many pauses and breakdowns. Everyone realized that the situation was an impossible one, and that the whole area was living from hand to mouth. It was not until M. Herriot succeeded M. Poincaré in 1924 that a ray of light appeared on the dark horizon.

Meantime, however, French chauvinism had let slip the dogs of paid treachery and rebellion in the Rhineland and to a lesser extent in the Ruhr, and both areas had again passed through scenes of bloodshed and terror in the effort to resist this *dénouement* of French Rhineland policy—the “Revolver Republic.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### "RED SUNDAY"

BEFORE telling the story of intrigue, treachery, espionage and violence which make up the history of the "Revolver Republic," as the Germans call the sham State which the French tried to set up in the Rhineland after the Occupation of the Ruhr, it is necessary to recall for a moment the preparatory years 1919-23.

It was a period of patient spade-work for the French authorities on the Rhine. For the unofficial (and therefore more irresponsible) *Comité de la Rive Gauche du Rhin* it was a period of impatient straining at the bonds which cautioned M. Paul Tirard, the French High Commissioner, to impose on its ardent desire to snatch the Rhine provinces from Germany. His goal was the same as theirs, and as that of the early military patrons of Separatism, General Mangin and General Gérard, but he was astute enough to realize the poor calibre of the tools which satisfied the others. The soldiers and the *Comité* had no time to waste on M. Tirard's cherished "cultural propaganda." They wished to confront Europe, and especially the arch opponent of the dismemberment of Germany, Great Britain, with a *fait accompli* before civilization had begun to slough its war psychology.

M. Poincaré, while placing his trust in the suave M. Tirard, was not averse to letting the less discreet methods of the *Comité* be tried out (provided France was not officially implicated), as the autumn of 1923 and 1924 proved.

M. Tirard always expected the Separatists to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for him, and with their hands; he was willing to give them all possible discreet protection, but up till 1923 declined to supply them with official tongs in the shape of arms and open support.

The men who became the tools of French policy fell into three groups, with a smaller fourth group operating in the territory under Belgian occupation. In the Bavarian Palatinate, both because of its proximity to Alsace-Lorraine and its remoteness from the inquisitive eye of the British occupation, the most undisguised support was accorded to the group of renegade Germans calling themselves the "*Bund Freier Pfalz*." The second group operated in the French zone from Wiesbaden, and was headed by "Pretty Addi"—the lawyer Doctor Adam Dorten. Thanks to the flat refusal of the American command to allow any intrigue against Germany under their *ægis*, Coblenz and the rest of the American zone had no Separatist organization. In the Belgian zone an obscure German named Deckers conducted Separatist propaganda from Aix-la-Chapelle.

The fourth group of "Rhineland Republicans" was established by the French (to the enormous discomfort of the British) in Cologne. It consisted of one Joseph Smeets—and very few others. Smeets,

whom we have not met before, was an unscrupulous agitator who, after a brief and undistinguished war career in the German Sanitary Corps, made his first public appearance in Cologne on the outbreak of the German Revolution. He joined one of the revolutionary "Soldiers' Councils." After being expelled from the Social-Democratic Party, he joined the extreme Communist wing of the Independent Socialists. When this party also dropped him he approached the French authorities through his brother-in-law, a Lorrainer who had served in the French Army, and placed himself at their disposal as an agent for the establishment of a Rhineland Republic. From the start he was a mischievous if largely negligible influence in the British zone, where he sought to exploit every industrial dispute in the interest of his French paymasters.

A book might be filled with the proofs given at one time and another by the French military and civil authorities of their determination to support and protect their creatures engaged in the Separatist agitation. For the moment it must suffice to mention a very few striking cases which occurred even before France came into the open in 1923. A meeting was summoned by Smeets in Bonn during June, 1921. Strong forces of French gendarmerie guarded the hall, and French detectives protected him on his return journey. On the other hand, German police who failed to prevent the singing of patriotic songs outside the house of a Separatist in the Mosel Valley were sent to prison by the French. The Belgians forced the Police

President of Aix-la-Chapelle to issue a proclamation in May, 1922, expressing his regret that the house of a Separatist had been painted over with threats and warnings by unknown German loyalists. In Bad Ems the French delegate undertook the distribution to the population of Smeets' traitorous newspaper, the *Rheinische Republik*. The Belgian's protégé, Deckers, was openly accompanied by Belgian officers on a motoring propaganda journey in the sub-district of Monschau.

In violation of the Treaty of Versailles and of the Rhineland Agreement, the French actually suspended the operation of the laws of the Republic on various occasions in order to support and protect their tools. When the Police President of Cologne prohibited for a time the publication of the *Rheinische Republik* with its treasonable articles, the French brought (through the unwilling British Commissioner) pressure to bear and cancelled the prohibition. When Smeets was sentenced in 1922 to several months' imprisonment for malicious libel, the Inter-Allied Rhineland Commission was forced to come into the open, and in a letter dated 7th October, 1922, to exempt Smeets from German Common Law by forbidding his imprisonment on the grounds of "his services to and relations with the Allied authorities."

In the Rhineland it looked as though the invasion of the Ruhr would be the signal for the proclamation under French protection of a Rhineland Republic. That no open step was taken in this direction for the moment was largely due to



the spontaneous outbursts of patriotic fervour among the population, such as the triumphal receptions accorded to Fritz Thyssen and his colleagues after their trial at Mainz. These were a great blow to M. Tirard and his helpers in the work of gallicizing the Rhineland by "cultural propaganda"; they were genuinely astonished to find that their years of work had done so little to convince the German on the Rhine that he was a Frenchman at heart. Passive resistance in the Ruhr gave the population of that area a common front on which to rally to fight the invader, and at the same time gave the French so much to do that a big forward move with the Rhine policy had to be postponed. That is why, although passive resistance in itself failed and had eventually to be abandoned unconditionally, the supporters of that plan of campaign claim with some justice that it preserved the integrity of German territory.

By the time the French were able to turn their full attention to the plan of a dummy republic the attention of the whole world had been attracted to their methods in the Ruhr, and sympathy had been aroused for Germany in the most unexpected quarters on account of the heroism shown by the defenceless working population of the Ruhr and the Rhineland under a most oppressive régime. In January, 1923, the world at large, which was quite uninformed concerning French policy and intrigues on the Rhine, would have been prepared to accept the story that the sham republic of ne'er-do-wells, gaol-birds and cranks which the French attempted to set up at the end of 1923 and

in 1924 really represented the Rhenish population, but by the time that the French were able to move the world was in a mood to look with suspicion on their activities.

Nevertheless, from the day when the French troops entered the Ruhr a new era began for the Separatists on the Rhine. A membership card of any of the organizations mentioned above sufficed to exempt the bearer from all punitive measures of the Germans and to secure him the full support of French troops and gendarmerie in any conflict with the loyal population. In Trier and elsewhere these German traitors were even issued with special passes by the French commandant.

M. Paul Tirard and M. Rolin Jacquemyns now began passing Ordinances over the head of Lord Kilmarnock, who had nothing to do but to repeat "I abstain" with monotonous regularity. Some of his staff suggested that the British Government was contemplating saving the cost of a High Commissioner by installing beneath a Union Jack (to which the French and Belgian High Commissioners would politely bow on introducing each new Ordinance), a gramophone labelled "British High Commissioner," which would repeat the necessary "I abstain" on being set in motion by M. Tirard.

It was thus no longer necessary to pay much attention to British susceptibilities in the matter of encouraging and protecting German traitors, while that uncomfortably inquisitive person, the "Unofficial American Representative," had gone to his own place. In return for more open support,

the Separatists were able to render useful service to the French as spies among the population. Thousands of expulsions were directly due to their denunciation of prominent loyalists, whose names were supplied in lengthy lists to the French.

In May, 1923, M. Tirard sought to use the threat of disorders being organized by the various Separatist centres to forward his pet scheme of securing the aims of French policy without bloodshed. He discreetly sounded a number of solid Rhinelanders as to the possibility of creating a sort of Rhenish Parliament in order, as it was put, to forestall the activists. He met with the coldest response. It became clear that France had only her Separatist mercenaries and dupes to rely upon for the execution of her plans, and from this time onwards the drilling and arming of Separatist gangs in preparation for a *Putsch* was organized with little attempt at secrecy.

On the evening of 17th March, 1923, rough justice was meted out to Josef Smeets, the leader of the Cologne Separatist group, despite all the efforts of the French to protect him from the natural consequence of treason. A young man got into his office, and in the presence of his clerk fired two shots at Smeets, whose skull was punctured by one of the bullets. He was taken to hospital and operated on immediately.

Next morning everyone in Cologne was talking of how, when the operating surgeon lifted the broken bone of the skull, a large tri-coloured moth flew out ! Be that as it may, the unfortunate Smeets was of little further use to the French,

and more or less fell out of subsequent developments. He died in Alsace as a result of the wound two years later.

The French, who barely mentioned in their *communiqués* the daily shooting at Germans by their sentries, raised a storm about the attempted murder of this German traitor, and unofficially insinuated that the occurrence was regarded with secret satisfaction by the British in Cologne. So high did feeling run that Mr. Julian Piggott, the British Commissioner in Cologne, felt it wise to assure himself personally that the best surgical skill available was placed at the service of the wounded man. The actual assailant was never traced, but a young man of 27 was arrested by the Cologne police after the severest pressure had been applied to them by the High Commission through the British in Cologne. No case was ever made out against him, but his arrest placated the French for the moment, and he was obliging enough to secure temporary peace for the British and for the German police in Cologne by remaining in prison without pressing unduly for the case against him to be heard until the excitement in Paris had died down.

The complete closing of the frontier between Occupied and Unoccupied German Territory in July, 1923, for several weeks led the Germans to believe that the French were going to launch their Separatist *Putsch* immediately (for their preparations were now obvious), but things were not yet ripe. The *Comité de la Rive Gauche du Rhin* required still some months to organize their

isolated troops of malcontents. Between "Pretty Addi" Dorten, the vain Wiesbaden lawyer, who had been a prominent "Hurrah Patriot" during the war, behind the German lines, where he had been decorated with the Iron Cross, First and Second Class, and who only turned Separatist from disappointed ambition, the scrubby little revolutionary Smeets, and the obscure profiteer Deckers there was little in common, and co-ordination was not easy. Secretly and under great difficulty the Germans began to organize resistance groups in all parts of Occupied Territory ready for the anticipated coup. Naturally the members of these groups were arrested and imprisoned or expelled by the French whenever it was possible to detect them. The political parties began to issue warnings to the population of what was afoot.

In the Palatinate, where General de Metz had pushed forward Separatist propaganda with all the vigour of his predecessor, General Gérard, the parties dared to rally the population. In a proclamation issued in July by all political parties and trade associations in the Palatinate it was stated :—

"The people of the Palatinate have long refused to listen to the handful of contemptible creatures who have tried to persuade them to follow dishonourable and treacherous courses. What we have had to suffer in the Palatinate since the Ruhr invasion has exceeded our worst anticipations. The German citizen has become an outlaw in time of peace and in his own country. His honour and his life are things of no value. It is sought to force us into actions which all men of honour must

condemn as high treason. Merely because we will not listen, or sacrifice our honour, our officials, our leading citizens and our workers are being sentenced to long terms of penal servitude, imprisonment and impossible fines. Thousands of our countrymen and women, babes in arms and greybeards have been hunted out of our Palatinate.

"Fellow countrymen: Your leaders are not able to speak to you openly at meetings and your newspapers are unable to speak freely. We choose, therefore, this means of addressing you. At this fateful hour we would only say: 'Stand fast in your loyalty to your native soil, your Fatherland and your leaders, who have mostly been banished from your midst.' We know we shall have to ask unheard-of sacrifices from you. We know that poverty and want are increasing daily. But we realize that the people of the Palatinate are all as true Germans as those of the Ruhr. We can trust you of the Palatinate to oppose any attempt to loosen the bands uniting us to Prussia and the Reich, a resistance that never can be broken. A united German people stands behind you."

On 30th July the French railway *Régie* ran "Separatist Specials" from all over the Rhineland to collect their protégés to the number of a couple of thousand to hear Dr. Dorten speak in Coblenz, which had been occupied by the French on the withdrawal of the Americans. French troops were held in readiness near the requisitioned hall which the French allotted to the meeting to protect the conspirators from any attack by the loyal population. On 16th August Bonn was the scene of another gathering of Separatists, similarly collected and conveyed free of charge by the French *Régie*. The Separatist newspapers began to publish the

meagre timetable of the *Régie* trains, and the latter reciprocated by placarding the stations with Separatist incitements to disloyalty to Germany. On 26th August some four hundred of these people were brought in the usual way to München Gladbach in the Belgian zone. A crowd of 30,000 citizens seized the Separatist banners and propaganda, which they burnt, belabouring the renegades with their flagpoles until Belgian troops came to the rescue. At Trier Colonel Guillebon, the local French Commandant, and his staff appeared at a big Separatist meeting for which the *Régie* had rounded up an audience of some 10,000 persons. There was fighting with the loyal population, and the Separatists used the revolvers which—again contrary to the Rhineland Agreement—the French allowed them to possess. Coloured French cavalry—the picturesque Spahis—came to their rescue.

About this time appeared on the scene a man called Matthes, who soon became the leader of the whole movement. I had many talks with him at Düsseldorf and elsewhere. In appearance a cross between a Mussolini and a prize-fighter, he was—I regret to record—an ex-colleague of my own. He had a record of sentences of imprisonment behind him, mostly for scurrilous libels published by his little Communist rag in Frankfurt-am-Main. He avoided serving one sentence by making his escape into Occupied Territory, where he entered the service of the French and worked under their Düsseldorf press bureau against his country. Matthes played the biggest rôle in arming and organising the Separatist “storm troops,” who now



*Smeets*



*Matthes*



*Dorten*

THREE "REVOLVER REPUBLICAN" LEADERS



came into being, and formed the second line of defence (after the now usual French cavalry escorts) against the loyal majority at the Separatist meetings which were being held every Sunday in many centres.

Soon Matthes was demanding that the French should establish a separate Rhineland currency (his own storm-troops were already drawing five French francs a day), while Dorten in July told his followers at a secret meeting that motor machine-gun sections had been formed. In Duisburg the Belgian General, Beaurain, told the German police that any counter-demonstration against the Separatists must be instantly suppressed.

In Düsseldorf a man named variously "Parsifal" and "Arndt" was given a French Army telephone and installed as Commander of the storm-troops. I was later to meet him as victor over the German forces of law and order at Crefeld, and have an example of his extraordinary powers over the dregs of the gaols whom he recruited into his cut-throat bands.

"Capitaine Parsifal's" labours were, of course, a flagrant breach of Articles 42 and 43, Section III, of the Treaty of Versailles, where it is laid down that in Rhineland "the maintenance and the assembly of armed forces, either permanently or temporarily, and military manœuvres of any kind . . . are . . . forbidden."

The culmination of all this arming, recruiting and training of "storm-troops"—the bloodshed of "Red Sunday" in Düsseldorf on 30th September—came under the most inauspicious circumstances

for Herr Matthes and his fellow-conspirators, but under ideal conditions for newspaper men, who, thanks to the activities of the German Intelligence Service, were practically invited to a *première* of the Separatist revolt, and provided with seats in the boxes—the balconies of the Breidenbacher Hof—from which to watch the slaughter in the streets below.

The very character of the supporters of this movement had made it impossible from the start for much secrecy to be maintained as to the Separatist aims, preparations and methods. Not only were most of them—even those high up in the hierarchy of treachery—easily re-purchasable by the German Secret Service, but dozens of patriotic young Germans had joined the Separatist councils for the sole purpose of spying on them for that Service. If the documentary evidence of French support of the movement was scanty, it was only because the French were too wise to allow anything compromising to be committed to paper. The Germans, however, were fully informed of the conferences between the French authorities and the Separatist leaders, and had far more detailed information concerning the revolutionaries' plans and armaments than they ordinarily allowed them to suspect.

When the German Secret Service in Rhineland learned that it had been decided to let Herr Matthes attempt an armed *Putsch* in Düsseldorf on 30th September with the aid of the largest mob of Separatists yet assembled in Rhineland (conveyed free by seventy special French *Régie*

trains), it was decided that since the French suppressed every attempt of the State and population to defend themselves, the only thing to do was to reveal the Separatists' plot in detail in the hope that they would not venture to put it into execution. The hope was not realized, but the revelation at least served to awaken foreign countries and to call together a large audience of the world Press, which helped to render this first *Putsch* abortive.

The Rhineland Press came out on 25th September, 1923, with a story of the preparations for an uprising under the protection of French bayonets at Düsseldorf on the following Sunday. The details had been furnished by Herr Matthes to a secret meeting of the Separatists' "Directorate," in which the *Comité de la Rive Gauche du Rhin* had succeeded in uniting the chiefs of the different Separatist groups. Matthes, it was revealed, had declared that the first step would be an attack by his "storm-troops" on the remaining German police in Düsseldorf. The police would be disarmed by the French or by the storm-troops, and their weapons used to complete the armament of a Separatist army. Germany had been forced to abandon passive resistance only a week before, and Matthes pointed out the importance of utilizing the psychological moment when German morale was at its lowest and French military prestige at its zenith.

The meeting was informed that the French had placed over seventy *Régie* trains at the disposal of the revolutionaries, and that it was hoped to bring

together 200,000 Separatists, including 40,000 miners (mainly Poles) from the Ruhr. Immediately after the mass meeting, in the early afternoon, the attack on the police would be made, and at 5 p.m. a document would be handed to General Degoutte. On receiving his approval, proclamations of the Rhineland Republic would be posted, and anyone attempting to remove them shot down.

The German Press at the same time recorded a visit of Herr Matthes to Coblenz to establish proper liaison between his Directorate and the French and Belgian High Commissioners. The newspapers also published details of the jubilation of the Separatists at the purchase of a number of French army revolvers for use on Sunday at the cost of 162 francs apiece, with cartridges at 1 franc each.

Matthes, of course, issued a formal denial of the existence of the plot, saying : " We are ready and armed for action, but the time for this will be governed by the development of the political situation."

This defiant admission of what had, of course, long been known to be the fact—that the Separatists were armed—called for immediate action by the French authorities, who were obliged under Article 20 of Ordinance III of the Rhineland High Commission either to arrest and imprison the Separatists, confiscating their arms, or, on the other hand, to admit frankly that they were allowing their armament for " special reasons."

The Ordinance governing the situation declared :  
" The possession of and traffic in arms of any

nature (whether firearms or otherwise) is strictly forbidden." The only exceptions made beyond police, customs and forestry officials were "certain classes of persons who by reason of the special duties they have to perform may be authorized by a special decision of the High Commission to carry arms and ammunition." It would, however, have been embarrassing for M. Poincaré to have had to admit that these gangs of roughs had the "special duties" of betraying their country and terrorizing the population to perform.

Matthes' denial of the *Putsch* plans naturally did not prevent the Germans of Düsseldorf from doing what they could to show their indignation at the French forcing on them this invasion by hired traitors and their foolish dupes (many of whom were harmless enough, and actuated by no more serious motive than the wish to take part in a jolly free excursion to Düsseldorf). The political parties, from Nationalists to Socialists, united in a manifesto urging everyone to remain at home between one and four o'clock, the hours fixed for the Separatist meeting (and *Putsch*). The tram service was suspended, and all cinemas, cafés and restaurants closed. Public officials volunteered to shut themselves up in their offices and to offer the best defence against seizure which inkpots and rulers would allow, the French having seen to it that no other weapons were available to oppose the Separatists' firearms.

On Sunday morning Düsseldorf presented the appearance of a dead city which had been discovered by a handful of foreign correspondents

and French officers. When the Rhineland Press "blew the gaff" on the plot a few days before, they had forced the French to modify their usual open assistance to the German traitors. Contrary to custom, no halls were requisitioned and no escort of French troops provided; the latter were ordered simply to stand to in barracks ready for an emergency. The *Régie* trains, however, performed their usual service, and I found Düsseldorf station in exclusive possession of as promising a gang of cut-throats as ever led mob violence. I soon acquired (with the aid of a little bad German spoken with a strong French accent) the necessary red, green and white badge to allow the special correspondent of *Les Teeme* (which masqueraded on this occasion as England's leading anti-German revolutionary organ) to move freely among these gentry. Many of them proudly showed me the revolvers loaded and ready in their hip-pockets, or wicked-looking lengths of iron tubing carried inside the trousers.

At 2 p.m. the storm-troops, equipped with revolvers and truncheons, moved off from the station towards the magnificent Königs-Allee, where Matthes reminded them that they had sworn to be "true to death." An hour later the main body (which the Separatists claimed was 100,000 strong and which may really have amounted to 40,000) appeared in the Königs-Allee and the Hindenburg Wall, where the meetings were to be held, escorted by the sinister storm-troops. For a time I wandered from meeting to meeting, where "Hyde Park orators" harangued the packed

masses on the sins and omissions of their own country and the virtues of France.

I was just returning, extremely bored, to the Breidenbacher Hof Hotel, whose windows commanded an excellent view of the whole scene, when I heard the sharp crack of two revolver shots several streets away. There was a rush down one side-street by a number of the storm-troops, while the others, in whose midst I was standing, pulled out Mausers (quickly fitting them on to wooden butts concealed under their coats), revolvers, clubs and lengths of lead piping covered with rubber. For nearly two minutes nothing more was heard, and here and there the speeches recommenced.

Then, quite near me, half a dozen revolver shots were fired in rapid succession, and panic seized the thousands of people gathered within the broad street known as the Hindenburg Wall. The masses broke and ran wildly in every direction, while the noise of rapid firing crackled along every side-street. Down came the shutters of the Breidenbacher Hof, and the hall porter shouted to me to come inside or be locked out amidst the fighting.

I had my camera with me, and could not resist the temptation to take one photograph of the terror-stricken crowd flying before the rattle of revolver and rifle fire, with storm-troops flourishing their clubs and trying to stay the panic, before I sought shelter within the hotel. As I did so, I saw a Separatist drop behind the statue of Moltke and fire half a dozen rounds deliberately into the fleeing crowd, who were mostly of his own party.

The blood-lust of these creatures of the underworld had got the upper hand and compelled them to fire at any running target. He dropped two men in the middle of the road, and they painfully crawled into shelter by the hotel steps.

From the balcony of the Breidenbacher Hof I had an excellent view of the ensuing struggle. Within five minutes the great mass of the people had squeezed themselves out of the wild *mêlée* of firing, leaving only the Separatist storm-troops, who had taken cover behind statues and in doorways and were firing viciously up the Hindenburg Wall at a target which for the moment I could not see. Then the glint of sunlight fell on helmets; the police were advancing in extended formation at a slow march down the street, firing their automatic pistols as they came.

From behind every tree and around every corner some Separatist stretched at full length on the pavement tried to pick them off. Immediately below me was a man emptying and reloading his Mauser as fast as he could fire. I saw him kill two policemen. Then a police bullet hit him in the leg; he squirmed round with a cry of pain, and another bullet passed through his head and he lay still. Three Separatists made a bolt across the side-street just before the police reached us; they were all three dropped with leg wounds. Though their enemies melted away as they advanced, the police kept firing isolated shots into the air, which were more dangerous to us on the balcony than to the malefactors in the streets below.

There was no way by which the police could



distinguish the Separatists from harmless citizens, once weapons were concealed, and they made no arrests, merely forcing anyone they encountered to hold up his hands and be searched for arms.

The streets outside the hotel were dotted with the bodies of the dead and seriously wounded. Firing had ceased near us, but some blocks away we could hear the measured tapping of a machine-gun or of the automatic pistols of the German police. Isolated groups of Separatists in twos and threes constantly dashed past the hotel trying to get back through the police to their rallying-point. Several times they levelled their revolvers at us on the balcony, compelling us to drop flat on the ground behind the balustrade. At the end of half an hour the shooting had died down, and the streets were empty, save for the police, who began to carry the wounded into the Breidenbacher Hof, where they were given first-aid in the hall. Order had been restored by the police and the *Putsch* defeated.

Twenty minutes later something occurred which must sound incredible to those who did not see it. The French troops—infantry, cavalry and armoured cars—emerged from barracks and began rounding up, arresting and disarming—not the ruffianly gangs of Separatists, but the Green Police who had put down the disorders. Soon one saw the luckless representatives of law and order, their heads hanging down and their faces red with shame, being marched weaponless to prison between the escorting French troops. With the appearance of the French the armed Separatists

who had been swept from the streets so easily by the police invaded them again.

At the corner by the Breidenbacher Hof occurred one of the most shocking incidents of the day. The Separatists were acting as the hounds in the police hunt of the French cavalry officers. Led by a dozen Separatists, twenty French cavalymen rode up to a policeman on duty close to the hotel and disarmed him. When this had been done, the Separatists turned on the defenceless man and beat him to death with clubs and lengths of lead piping.

The doomed policeman buried his face in his arms and sank to the ground. The French cavalry reined in their horses and looked on calmly without interfering while the twenty or more blows were delivered which were needed to kill him. The policeman's body was left lying in the road while the French and the Separatists moved off to re-enact the same scene on another defenceless policeman a few yards away.

I recorded this hideous incident in *The Times* of 30th September, and as may be imagined, brought a storm of abuse from French, pro-French and Separatist circles on my head. The reception accorded to my Ruhr dispatches, however, had already inured me to such attacks, which on this occasion were suddenly silenced when the *Daily Sketch*, a fortnight later, published an authentic and amazing photograph (smuggled out of Germany) of the very murder of a policeman which I had described.

In the picture the man is seen falling headlong ;

the lead piping of one Separatist has just struck him on the back of the head, while another is preparing to deliver a second blow. The French cavalymen are clearly seen, so close that the falling policeman almost brushes their stirrup-leathers, their faces wearing an expression of interest, if not of approval. In justice to the French generally, it must be said that there were several recorded (and probably more unrecorded) instances that night of their protecting their disarmed police prisoners from the Separatist assassins.

A few weeks later *The Nation* (London) published a letter signed "Sixteen Readers of *The Nation*," in which my dispatch was contrasted in parallel columns with that of Mr. Ward Price, now Foreign Editor of the *Daily Mail*. He gave a very different picture of the events of "Red Sunday" from that which I had supplied, and the signatories asked in effect, "Which is the liar?"

The incident was a very uncomfortable one for me, since it was quite obvious, considering the policy of *The Nation*, that an attempt was being made to use my dispatch to give the lie to a colleague. Mr. Ward Price (whom I had met for the first time the day after the riot in Cologne and liked immensely) made an excellent and courteous reply, pointing out that in such a whirlwind battle it was quite possible for two observers in different parts of the city to see quite a different picture. In point of fact, Mr. Ward Price gave a thrilling and vivid account of what he happened to see, but having been rushed out to Düsseldorf

from London specially for "Red Sunday," he was naturally compelled to rely upon the French Press Bureau for background and general guidance, whereas I had the inestimable advantage of having watched the Separatist plot being prepared from the inside for three years, and as a journalist for nearly another two.

After having seen the Krupp directors arrested and sent to prison because their workmen had dared to be shot down by French troops, it was no surprise to find the French Propaganda Bureau propounding a theory that the police were entirely to blame for the fighting of "Red Sunday," and a trial with long sentences of imprisonment for the police following later. How the shooting actually started was established neither at the trial nor anywhere else. It was believed at first that it originated in a collision between Separatists and Communists, but this proved largely inaccurate. Taking into consideration the fact that Herr Matthes' motor-car was found by the German police that day to be carrying thirty bombs (in addition to the leader himself) and that, a few minutes before the outbreak of shooting, Separatists attacked two policemen from behind and deprived them of their arms, there can be little doubt that Herr Matthes did, indeed, attempt the *Putsch* which he was known to have prepared.

Next morning I had a talk with Herr Matthes in the place where he was usually to be found—the French Propaganda Bureau.

"It was all planned by the Prussian police," he said, "as I warned the French in advance.

Unfortunately, our French friends would not take the simple precaution of lining the streets for us with French troops. There was no violence on our side."

When I pressed him concerning the armament of his roughs he became impatient and shouted, "Lies, lies—all Prussian lies! We had only sixty to eighty revolvers."

I asked him how he could explain the murder of the two unarmed policemen, and he turned on his heel to leave the room, muttering: "I know nothing about it."

It was no use to play *Les Teeme* with Herr Matthes—he knew me too well.

A year later he addressed an amusing open letter to the Editor of *The Times* about me which was published in *L'Eclair* of 12th August, 1924. He kindly referred to me as "your infallible Rhineland correspondent," and complained of the way in which I had castigated this bogus "movement." He admitted the presence of criminals in his ranks, but said that the leaders had always tried to exercise a highly moral influence, and that the worst provocators "came from Cologne, amply provided with English gold." He raged against British brutality as shown in Ireland, in the Boer concentration camps "where women, old men and children were sent by thousands into eternity in the interests of British power," in Egypt, in India, "and in all parts of the world." "*The Times*," he added, "always had been the bulwark of Prussia." He was good enough to announce that I was to receive on 11th August, on the anniversary of the

German Constitution, the highest Prussian Order, "*Pour le Mérite*."

"May I offer him my compliments on this well-earned distinction," concluded the letter.

Perhaps the German Government entrusted my decoration to Separatists for delivery ; for that or for some other reason, it must have disappeared *en route*, for it has never reached me.

## CHAPTER IX

### FINISHING TOUCHES TO A PLOT

THE bloodshed of "Red Sunday" in Düsseldorf was a momentary check to the gangsters working in the interests of France. It was no check to French policy, but the beginning of a new phase—one of open terrorism. All attempts to conceal the fact which a startled Europe was very slowly beginning to realize—that the French authorities on the Rhine were definitely engaged in a conspiracy with malcontents, goal-birds and ne'er-do-wells—were now quickly abandoned. The object of the conspiracy was to place the leaders of these armed gangs at the head of a dummy "Republic," claiming to control Germany's fairest, richest and most cultured provinces—not indeed, for ever, but until such time as the population should be driven by sheer terror into cutting themselves adrift from the rest of Germany, when France would cynically have restored her Separatist dupes to the obscurity or prisons from which they had been taken.

Immediately after the abortive attempt of Matthes against the Düsseldorf police an intensive terrorist campaign set in. In its course not only the Separatists, but the Communists, the unemployed

and (most effective allies of all) starvation and fuel shortage were used by the French for the dual object of scaring the industrialists into economic capitulation to the ambitious demand of the *Comité des Forges* to dominate in the Ruhr, and of securing political separation.

The British "Island of Peace," Cologne, did not escape the backwash. Food riots began there on 11th October, when maddened crowds of unemployed started smashing shop windows and plundering. It was soon established that the chief agitators among them were men who on "Red Sunday" had used revolvers and cudgels in the ranks of Matthes' storm-troops. Hunger had made the unemployed—and even hundreds of thousands of men in employment, but paid in paper marks which lost their purchasing power quicker than they could be turned into goods—so desperate that these riots were renewed towards dusk every day for a week, despite the fact that in Cologne the police were at full strength and could rely on the ultimate support of the British troops.

In Düsseldorf and many cities and towns of the Ruhr from which the State police had long ago been expelled a reign of terror set in. Shopkeepers were ever on the *qui vive* for the howls and rapid clatter of feet which denoted the approach of a pack of half-starved human wolves. Unless the shutters could be crashed down with lightning rapidity, half-a-dozen bricks hurled through the plate-glass windows placed the stock at the mercy of plunderers, many of whom by virtue of enrolment in the ranks of the Separatists carried arms



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by French permission and were under French protection. Here and there inadequate protection was afforded by hastily recruited and untrained "Specials," but often there were not even these available.

The German Reich was now in greater danger of dissolution than at any time since its formation. The French began to play off one group of German industrialists against the other. While the negotiations with the leaders of the Ruhr—Stinnes, Thyssen, Vögler, Klöckner and Krupp—were mainly of an economic character, a different line was taken with Herr Otto Wolf. Him the French tried to make the rallying point for that considerable body of the sober population of Rhineland which feared for the complete destruction of its economic well-being and, with ever more bitter hatred of France in its heart, was yet prepared to say:

"We can bear no more. Make your Rhine Republic as you will, but make an end of the terror."

Otto Wolf was the head of a great "vertical trust" representing one-fifth of the Ruhr capitalists. The "vertical trust" is one in which is combined the control of every stage of production, as distinct from the "horizontal trust," in which firms engaged in the same process of production form a trust to control supplies and prices. Otto Wolf's trust included the two giant concerns of Phoenix and Rheinstahl, mines and blast furnaces, smelting works and marine and railway construction works.

Wolf had made a fortune out of munitions during the war and had extensive interests in Russia. I knew him well, having been billeted in his house for many months when serving on the Rhineland Commission, firstly under Colonel Ryan and secondly under Mr. Piggott, who occupied in succession two floors of his imposing villa on the Rhine. He was the true type of international entrepreneur, treating frontiers and racial distinctions as the concern mainly of the children among mankind, unworthy of the serious consideration of the modern rulers of the world whose power was based not on political symbols, but on gold, coal, oil and iron.

He had accepted the British invasion of his house with good-natured indifference. It was the fortune of war that British officers should now make themselves at home amidst the luxury which he had accumulated, just as a little while before that fortune had enabled him to live at ease in luxurious châteaux in occupied France and Belgium while he was organizing the economic exploitation of those countries in the interests of German heavy industry. When we put two motor-cars in his garage he smilingly handed us the keys, bought an adjoining plot of land and built himself a new garage, rather than be incommoded by sharing the old one with us. His family clearly—and naturally—resented our presence in his house, but Otto Wolf had the serene philosophy of his comfortable figure. He invited his compulsory guests to luncheons and dinners, and accepted readily their return invitations to him, when he

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was allowed as a guest to look for a few hours at his luxurious carpets, furniture and pictures, the ownership of which we had usurped. He was thereby enabled to note the process of deterioration which seems the inevitable accompaniment of the occupation of all premises by foreign troops, however considerate they may strive to be. Otto Wolf can hardly have loved us, but he cut his losses like a wise man and had peace in his house.

He certainly disliked the French and knew well the advantage of the Rhineland remaining German. But when the French invaded his industrial, as we had his personal, home he did not allow "catch words," such as patriotism, to blind him to practical considerations. He wanted peace in his industrial home also, and therefore did not, like the Ruhr industrialists, refuse to see the French except as one of a committee of industrial leaders, but (despite his professions of bitter enmity at the beginning of the Ruhr conflict) entered into private negotiations with the wily M. Tirard. Shortly after the beginning of the terrorist phase the Cologne *Tageblatt*, in which he owned the majority of the shares, began to suggest that on no account must Matthes, Smeets, Dorten and company be allowed to be put in power by French bayonets. If the French-made Republic was to be forced upon them, then let the solid Rhinelanders put forward their own responsible leaders who should carry out what would placate the French, with a minimum risk to the prosperity of the country.

This was, of course, an infinitely more dangerous movement to German unity than the Separatist terror which forced it into existence. It is unlikely that either M. Tirard or Herr Wolf will ever reveal just how near the former was to seeing his velvet-glove methods triumph in consequence of the severity with which the iron hand of the *Comité de la Rive Gauche* wielded the blood-stained weapon of Separatism.

Throughout October the French made feverish preparations for the proclamation of the "Revolver Republic." General Degoutte issued Military Proclamation, No. 74, placing under special protection "all associations which actively or by repute render assistance to the Armies of Occupation," and actually giving such persons the right to claim for any loss or damage suffered through their activities against the German authorities. Bürgermeisters were instructed by the French "to comply with all demands of the Rhenish Separatists for the hiring of public halls"; punishment for disobedience was threatened.

We saw Herr Matthes at the French Propaganda Bureau in Düsseldorf nearly every day. Filled with the anticipation of coming glory, he endeavoured to look more and more like a Mussolini and less and less like a prize-fighter. He urged his cut-throat gangs to keep a close watch on the German watchmen, firemen, and special constables, reporting to the French authorities any signs of preparations to offer resistance to his treacherous schemes. The French put pressure on municipalities to sign papers agreeing to pay the cost of the

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local French garrison. This was, of course, in preparation for the final cutting off of Rhineland from the Reich. Everywhere pretexts were found for depriving guards and responsible citizens of such arms as they were still allowed to have. These were then issued in other areas to the Separatist gunmen.

On 2nd October M. Tirard, abandoning his early reserve towards the "professional" Separatists, received the committees of the Dorten and Matthes groups at Coblenz. M. Tirard assured Matthes that his version of the events of "Red Sunday" agreed entirely with the French story. In a conference lasting for an hour and a half M. Tirard told the German traitors that he approved entirely of their plans, and that they might rely at all times on his help, emphasizing his goodwill with warm handshakes all round. As the result of his advice, the summoning of big public demonstrations such as that which had culminated in the unsuccessful Düsseldorf *Putsch* was abandoned.

All efforts were concentrated on strengthening the storm-troops. The leaders issued a secret instruction calling attention to the fact that the French must not be compromised by any official discussion of the arming of the storm-troops which, the communiqué added, "is even illegal." On 9th October Matthes appointed a former Communist "Red Army" leader to command the Separatist storm-troops in the Belgian zone. Preparations were made for the printing of a Separatist currency in Paris. The German Secret

Service reported that at a meeting in the office of the Belgian, Lieutenant Dolfe, attended by the Separatist leaders and the French and Belgian High Commissioners, the 18th November was fixed as the date for the *Putsch*, which was to establish a Rhine Republic, divided into three zones—"Southern," with the seat of government in Coblenz; "Ruhr," with the capital Düsseldorf; and "Northern," controlled from Aix-la-Chapelle.

# An das Rheinische Volk!

**Der Tag der Rheinischen Freiheit  
ist angebrochen!**

**Das Rheinland den Rheinländern!**

Fremden hat Deutschland überlassen und zu Grunde gerichtet, die Berliner Regierung hat uns verraten und betrogen. Unser Volk hat dem Elend preisgegeben. Wenn wir nicht den Mut haben, uns selbst zu helfen.

**Wir haben gehandelt! Die öffentliche Gewalt befindet sich in unseren Händen!** Ruhe und Ordnung sind gewährleistet. Die Lebensmittelversorgung, ist im höchsten Maße sichergestellt. Die Wiederherstellung des Wirtschaftslebens durch Schaffung einer eigenen rheinischen Währung ist eingeleitet, der Wiederaufbau unserer Heimat hat begonnen. Wir wollen Frieden und gesunde Arbeit.

Finft Jahr Ringen der Rheinischen Republik ist es, ein alter Kaffee in der Welt ist unser Leben. Wir alle haben gleiche Rechte und gleiche Pflichten.

**Gehe jeder an seine Arbeit.**

Alleinungen der Rheinischen Republik werden mit ausschließlicher Gewalt ausgestattet. Sonstige Anordnungen werden von der vorläufigen Regierung erlassen, deren Willkür ist.

**Es lebe die Rheinische Republik!**

**Die vorläufige Regierung.**

(Photo Linstedt and Zimmermann, Coblenz)

*The Proclamation of the "Revolver Republic"*

## CHAPTER X

### DENOUEMENT

ON Sunday, 21st October, the storm burst prematurely at Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), where the Belgians ruled. Armed bands of Separatists seized the public buildings and promptly cut all telephone and telegraphic communication with the city. The *coup* was carried out between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. by the Separatist Deckers as the instrument of the Belgians. The latter made all arrangements to secure the success of the *Putsch*. On the preceding day armoured cars were brought into the city to suppress any counter-attack, the German chief of police was arrested and Belgian troops ordered to stand to in barracks.

The handful of police was withdrawn at once by the Germans to their head-quarters when the *Putsch* had been put through, in order to avoid useless bloodshed. Only one person, a hotel porter, was killed by the Separatists for trying to remove one of their proclamations pasted on the front of the hotel. This proclamation ran :

“ PEOPLE OF THE RHINE.—The Rhine Republic has been definitely established. Any opposition will be severely punished, and any attempt at disorder will be repressed.



The Government is occupying itself with the work of food supplies and work for all. We ask the people to maintain order and calm, and go about their occupations as usual.

"On behalf of the Provisional Government :—

" (Signed) DECKERS."

After sending a brief message from Cologne on the day of the Aix-la-Chapelle *Putsch*, I arrived at Aix itself late on Sunday night. The population appeared completely cowed. Armed roughs stood at the door of every public building, and experience of the methods of the "requisition gangs" made it impossible to persuade any chauffeur to move his car out of the garage. There was not a policeman in the streets, of course, and with all communication stopped by the Separatists, I was condemned for the night to inactivity.

\* \* \* \* \*

Immediately on the announcement of the Aix-la-Chapelle *Putsch* the "Revolver Republicans" had risen under the protection of French troops in Mainz, Coblenz, Trier, Bonn and many other centres—not in agreement with the *Putschisten* in the Belgian zone, but because the latter had forced their hand. The German Secret Service had been caught napping at Aix-la-Chapelle, owing to an unsuspected intrigue of the Belgian chauvinists against the French. Germany had rightly regarded the main danger as coming from the French zone, since the French and not the Belgians were the sponsors of Separatism. In

Brussels there was much discontent with the whole French scheme, and co-operation was unwilling. But Belgium saw the danger of being completely enveloped by a great French-controlled Rhineland.

Under British diplomatic suggestion, Belgian support, so far as the Brussels Cabinet was concerned, was becoming lukewarm. But in Occupied Territory the local executive had got largely into the hands of the Belgian Nationalists, whose distrust of the French took the form of a determination to anticipate them and to establish through the man Deckers a separate Rhineland Republic to be called "Rhineland North." For this reason (while the German Secret Service agents in the councils of Matthes, Dorten and Smeets guaranteed that the moment for these to strike had not yet arrived) the Belgian police-officer Peters, one of the most active supporters of violent action in the Belgian zone, gave the word to go forward without allowing the Separatists in the French zone to know what was afoot.

"It is high time to proclaim the Rhineland Republic," Peters told Deckers and other Separatists two days before the *Putsch*, "because it is probable that France is about to commit herself definitely to a policy of outright annexation of the Rhineland." Colonel Raul, who was present as representative of the *Comité de la Politique National Belge*, promised that within forty minutes 2,000 carbines could be placed at the disposal of the revolutionaries, and that after the

*Putsch* the Belgians would supply foodstuffs on credit to the population.

After the blow had been struck simultaneously in Aix-la-Chapelle and Duisburg, which was also in Belgian occupation, the police (who in the Rhineland had been weakened, but not expelled *en masse* as in the Ruhr) formally requested the Belgian authorities to allow them to disarm and deport the Separatist gunmen.

They were told by the Belgian delegate :

"The police is a non-political body and must not interfere. A political party has seized power by a *coup d'état*. The Authorities of Occupation will not tolerate any disorder."

This cynical attitude was the one which M. Tirard had recommended, and which was subsequently adopted throughout the French zone in parallel cases. "Disorder" was not the seizure by force or guile of public buildings by a handful of armed desperadoes, but it was any attempt by the police to uphold the authority of the State and to defend the rights of the whole population. The Belgians unofficially advised the police to place themselves at the disposal of the revolutionaries.

On Monday morning I saw the local Separatist leader, who told me that storm-troops were being dispatched in motor lorries to surrounding towns, there to repeat the *coup*. During the day the Germans made their plans for a counter-attack. Angry crowds gathered in the afternoon in the neighbourhood of Separatist head-quarters and started singing patriotic songs. After calling on the crowds to disperse, the Separatists opened

fire with revolvers and carbines, and as the people scattered a dozen were left writhing on the pavement. Two hours' shooting by Separatist patrols who careered round the town in stolen motor-cars now set in. The Belgian gendarmerie took not the slightest notice of the firing, but eventually the German police emerged from their head-quarters and cleared the streets of gunmen. Next morning a group of German students stormed a Separatist recruiting office, despite the fact that the storming party was armed only with walking-sticks and the Separatists with revolvers.

From the Separatist head-quarters in the Rathaus motor-patrols were rushed to the rescue. Their occupants were crazed and ruthless. Horrible scenes followed.

I saw how one Separatist car came tearing down a side-street, its occupants shooting at anyone they could see. People dropped wounded right and left. A little boy of three was shot dead on the doorstep of his house and several women wounded. In the ensuing panic the Belgians decided to allow the German police to restore some kind of order. Only too pleased, the men immediately issued from barracks and drove the Separatists from the streets amid the wild cheers of the population. Two Separatists were lynched by the crowd, and as one after the other all the public buildings except the Rathaus were evacuated by them under the pressure of the police, the red, white and green revolutionary flags were seized and torn to pieces.

Outside the Rathaus I witnessed a dramatic

scene. At the upper windows of the building a hundred Separatists kept their revolvers and carbines levelled on the German police in the street below as the latter held back the infuriated crowds which were ready to storm the Rathaus with naked fists. The (German) Acting Governor of Aix-la-Chapelle and the police officer in charge urged them to surrender, promising complete protection.

"Let our Belgian friends escort us," shouted the Separatists; but the Belgian officers present, who were watching to see that neither the police nor the crowd touched their protégés, gave no signal.

Then the Separatists asked the German police to bring a ladder, as their own storm-troops at the doors had orders to shoot them down if they tried to surrender. At this moment Belgian gendarmerie arrived, and the Separatists withdrew their offer to surrender.

The German police now told the Belgian officers that as part of their duty in restoring order as instructed, they would storm the building and capture its Separatist defenders. This the Belgians forbade and the police were ordered to march off.

A Separatist with a blood-stained bandage round his head called upon the "Men of France and Belgium, for whom we have dared all, to do all for us." Still the Belgians remained undecided. At this moment a former colleague of mine on the Rhineland Commission, who had become the British Vice-Consul in Aix-la-Chapelle, Captain

Fein, persuaded the Separatists to let him enter the building as mediator. I followed him past the ruffianly-looking guards by the usual expedient of speaking German with a French accent.

Wounded and dying men lay about the hall, and the guards carried every description of weapon—long knives, Belgian revolvers, carbines and leaden clubs. Through a crowd of weedy and terrified youths we made our way to the office of Herr Deckers, a poor figure of a dictator, who jumped at every sound and was clearly expecting to be paid for his treachery at any moment by a German bullet. Fein tried hard to persuade him to sign a capitulation on a guarantee of safe conduct. Deckers had actually taken up his pen to do so when the Belgian police-officer Peters, who had been speaking on the telephone to Belgian head-quarters, said :

“Deckers, sign nothing. At 7 p.m. we shall clear the streets with our troops, proclaim a curfew and a state of siege. You will have no more opposition to face.”

At once Deckers' attitude changed. The blood came back to his pale face, and he laughed across the table to the British Vice-Consul.

“No surrender,” he cried, “is now the parole. We will fight on. Two hundred armed storm-troops are arriving as reinforcements from Crefeld this evening.”

In the terror and excitement of this critical hour I was able to escape notice, which was just as well for me. It would certainly have been made uncomfortable for the detested *Times* correspondent

had he been discovered sitting at the council table of the Belgian Separatist plotters. Fein was not altogether happy to find that I had penetrated there under cover of his own admission in an official capacity; behind Deckers' back he motioned to me to go away. I shook my head, and he was too good a sportsman to betray me to the gang of conspirators.

Thus it was that I was able to witness the pretty spectacle of this Belgian officer, Peters, sitting down before a typewriter and composing a letter in French which Deckers signed, although he could not read a word of the language. In the name of "The Provisional Directorate of the Rhineland Republic" the latter called upon the Belgians for help and protection "for the existing government against the brutal Prussians." This letter Peters then dispatched to his superior, the Belgian delegate of the Rhineland High Commission.

As confidence returned to the conspirators, their curiosity began to be aroused as to whom I might be. Peters looked at me sharply and asked me what my business was. Fein tumbled to the situation in a moment and spoke a few words to me in English. It was quite sufficient to divert the attention of Peters, and I remained to see Deckers, after he had been assured that there was a cordon of Belgian gendarmerie around the building and no German police or civilians within pistol shot, emerge on to the street and lead a handful of his cut-throats in "Three cheers for the Rhineland Republic!" and "Down with

Prussia!" for the benefit of an American film operator.

The Belgian chauvinists and their Separatist friends were at first incredulous and then beside themselves with fury when my whole story of the scene between Peters and Deckers was cabled back from *The Times* next day.



## CHAPTER XI

### GOVERNMENT BY DESPERADOES

"WE will disarm your victim and bind him hand and foot. We will put the knife in your hand and stand by to seize him if he struggles, but you must cut his throat yourself. Remember, we are strictly neutral."

This was the substance of the instructions given by the French to the Separatists for the *Putsch* in the French zone which developed sporadically between 21st and 24th October. The university town of Bonn, only one hour by light railway from Cologne, but in French occupation, furnished one of the best of many examples of how the appearance of neutrality was preserved by the French authorities while they were actually putting power into the hands of the dregs of the population—not only of the Rhineland, but of any country from which desperadoes could be recruited for the adventure.

On 22nd October the Germans received warning that the French were going to put through a Separatist *Putsch* that night. The objective was as usual to be the local Rathaus, and here the police were concentrated. The French delegate of the High Commission warned the Bürgermeister that they would tolerate no violence in the event



*A typical group of "Revolver Republican" troops*



*Barbed wire defences erected by Separatists with French material to defend Neuss Rathaus from counter-attacks by the population*

Photo Deutscher Litchbild-Dienst

of any "political action" being undertaken by the Rhineland Republicans. It was already known that the French plan was in every case to let the Separatists blaze away at the police to their hearts' content until the latter either surrendered or returned the fire. At the crack of the first police revolver it was the French practice to send their troops on to the scene to arrest the civil authorities and disarm the police on the ground that "Prussian brutality" was at work. The Bürgermeister of Bonn, therefore, placed the police firearms under lock and key in the Rathaus, issued truncheons and had a length of fire-hose connected up with a hydrant of the building.

At 1.15 a.m. between 300 and 400 armed Separatists arrived by motor-lorry. They formed up under the protection of a squadron of French cavalry, by whom they were then escorted to the Rathaus Square. The French guarded every side-street, but kept off the square itself, where the Separatists extended to open formation and advanced with carbines at the carry on the Rathaus. As the first line approached the steps, which their leader ascended revolver in hand, the door slightly opened and a well-aimed jet of water knocked him backwards amongst his comrades and scattered their ranks.

The Separatists now stretched themselves at full length on the square and began the siege of the Rathaus. They made several attacks on the side entrance under cover of heavy carbine and revolver fire, but in every case were repulsed, either by a well-directed stream from the fire-hose

of the element which they probably encountered in quantity for the first time in their lives, or by the hard argument of a police truncheon. The French gendarmes watched the unequal battle for three hours, waiting for the German police to fire a single shot in their own defence. At 4 a.m. the Bürgermeister telephoned to the French delegate to say that it was impossible to allow the shooting to continue, and that he proposed to issue their arms to the police and clear the square.

Before he could do so French cavalry and armoured cars debouched from the side-streets and ordered the doors of the Rathaus to be opened, asserting that the police had fired a shot. On the heels of the French came the Separatist mob and hoisted the hated red, white and green flag over the Rathaus. The French examined the German police ammunition while they locked up the police and the Town Council in two separate rooms. Finding the ammunition complete, they admitted that they had made a mistake and withdrew, after releasing ten Separatists who had been made prisoners by the police and returning to them the arms of which the authorities had deprived them.

"And your friends?" asked the Bürgermeister, indicating the mob of bedraggled revolutionaries. "They, of course, leave with you?"

"We know nothing of them," smiled the French commandant cynically. "Apparently the Rhinelanders have successfully revolted against the Prussians and occupied the Rathaus. We, of course, are entirely neutral, and would only warn

you that we shall not tolerate any disorder or violence against the representatives of the new State."

The French gendarmerie remained to see that no attempt was made to interfere with the Separatists, and the Germans had no option but to leave the "victors" in possession of the Rathaus.

On 24th October I had an amusing interview with the local President of the "Rhineland Republic," Mr. Natter, in his captured stronghold, Bonn Rathaus. With the aid of my French Press permit, I gained admission to the hall of the Rathaus, where dirty and dishevelled Separatists, many with rough bandages over their wounds, dozed over their revolvers and sabres, or fortified their spirits with looted cognac. Their leader sat at the desk of the deposed Bürgermeister, and when I began with my usual Franco-German speech interrupted me in fluent "American," saying:

"Why, Mr. Gedye, sit right down and let me put you wise to the truth which the pro-Prussian *Times* so misunderstands."

He shook his head reproachfully at me.

"Dear, oh dear, what *turrible* mistakes you have made concerning this great national uprising of the Rhinelanders to cast off the foreign yoke of the German Reich. Have you no sympathy for those of us who, like Garibaldi, would lead our people to freedom?"

I assured him that I should have every sympathy with such leaders and with such a movement, could I find any traces of either.

"But tell me, Mr. Natter," I said, "is it,

perhaps, the great American people whom you would lead to freedom?"

"Why, no, Mr. Gedye," he returned genially. "You can quite properly call me Herr Natter, for I am a Rhinelander, from Bonn, although I had to emigrate to the States some twenty years ago to escape Prussian persecution." (As I ascertained later from the German police records, and had published in *The Times*, the "persecution" from which Mr. Natter fled was a warrant for his arrest on charges of assaulting schoolgirls.)

"And this great national uprising of Rhinelanders of which you speak, Mr. Natter—does it include the whole population?"

"Surely, my dear Mr. Gedye, the whole population—except for a handful of Communists bribed by English and Prussian gold."

I led him to the window and pointed to the square where a couple of thousand well-dressed Bonn citizens were glowering at the red, white and green banner of treachery waving over the Rathaus, and staring resentfully at the French troops posted significantly close to the entrance.

"As I came through that crowd, Mr. Natter, I heard such unkind things being said about you. To my uninstructed eye those people look like the solid middle-class citizens of Bonn. I suppose I was mistaken?"

"Entirely, my dear sir. Those people are brutal Communists—just Communists."

"Both men and women?" I asked.

"Exactly so."

"And the hundred or so unshaven and collarless

gentlemen I saw in your hall with firearms and naked swords by their side—they looked to me not unlike a mob of Communist plunderers themselves. But they, I suppose, would be the solid population of Rhineland engaged in throwing off the yoke of Prussia, Moscow and—*The Times*.”

“Those boys of mine are just the salt of the earth, and gallant Rhenish patriots.”

I thanked Mr. Natter for his instructive information, and he bowed me out, murmuring : “Put it in *The Times*, my dear friend, put it all in *The Times*.”

There was not space for the whole of Mr. Natter’s revelations in my paper, but what I did put in *The Times* was a leaflet then being circulated by all the recognized political parties of Bonn (though the name of Mr. Natter was mockingly appended—entirely without his authority—as signature.) It ran :

“Fellow citizens! Rhinelanders! The hour of freedom has struck. Our power in Bonn is based on unscrupulous suppression of the truth, the muzzling of the Press, and the clearly attested morality of our aims and our leaders. We summon to our side all those who have already strayed from the narrow path and fallen into the hands of the police. We promise all-embracing amnesties. We feel for human weakness, as our own police dossiers show.”

Here followed a list of the local Commissars appointed by the Separatists, with details of their previous convictions :

“Chief of police : Josef Heimann, assistant waiter, three sentences, including five years for highway robbery.

"Public Security : Johann Nowak, shoemaker, four convictions including ten years for manslaughter.

"Religion and Schools : Alex Henderkott, brothel-keeper, twenty-two convictions.

"Health : Heinrich Groll, manservant, twelve convictions.

"Traffic : Johann Paffonholz, messenger, twenty-three convictions.

"Art and Culture : Ludwig Schulz, trumpeter, thirteen convictions.

"Guardian of the Poor : Ferdinand Graef, painter and decorator, six convictions.

"Anti-Profiteering Police : Johann Simon, workman, fifteen convictions.

"Military Organization : Robert Junker, baker, three convictions."

Five "Commissars without portfolio" were named, with thirty convictions to their joint credit. This leaflet, although its issue was not authorized by the alleged signatory, was a perfectly genuine document, as the police satisfied me by producing the records of these gallant gentlemen for my inspection. The publication of this list was accompanied by an amusing leading article in *The Times*. Part of it ran :

"It is reported that Rhineland Separatists in Crefeld have destroyed the registers of criminals and the Rogues' Photographs Gallery. This is not surprising. Judging by the photographs of Rhineland Separatists that have appeared in this journal it may be supposed that not a few of the members of their armed bands have a personal interest in these official records. The account of the agitated past of the members of the so-called Provisional Government of the Rhineland, which our Cologne



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correspondent communicates to-day, suggests indeed that such action on their part was almost imperative. During the last few days the British Government have sent to the Governments of France and Belgium a courteous Note intimating that they will refuse . . . to recognize an independent Rhineland Republic . . . it will prevent any official recognition of the serious and unpardonable disorder now prevailing in Rhineland. . . . There is an ordinance of the Rhineland High Commission which forbids the bearing of arms. Why should it not be strictly applied in the French and Belgian zones, as it is applied in the British zone, to those doubtful characters who at this moment call themselves Separatists ? ”

Mr. Natter reigned in Bonn Rathaus for an even shorter period than his Separatist colleagues elsewhere. One night a few weeks later, when the French were preparing to abandon these discarded tools to their fate, a party of German students organized by one of the patriotic secret societies rushed the ragamuffin sentries, and before his followers realized what was afoot Mr. Natter once again “ emigrated,” clad in pale lilac pyjamas, over the roof of Bonn Rathaus towards some happier land where Prussian prejudice in the matter of the protection of schoolgirls could not curb his free spirit.

It was not surprising that in places either smaller or more remote from the prying eyes of foreign correspondents the French bothered less about maintaining a façade of neutrality. In Andernach, for example, the population expelled the Separatists from the Rathaus on 24th October

and disarmed them, whereupon the French gendarmerie marched out and drove back the citizens with the butts of their carbines and reinstated the gunmen. In Düren black troops charged the crowds with fixed bayonets when the latter attempted to eject the Separatists from the public buildings. In Trier wild Spahi cavalry were constantly brought into action side by side with the Separatists against the population.

A dozen instances of this sort of thing have been established beyond possibility of contradiction. It is surprising, however, that at Coblenz, the seat of the Rhineland High Commission itself, Matthes could call daily for nearly a fortnight at the office of the local French delegate for Coblenz, Colonel Phillippe, to draw pay for his gangs.

Still more surprising is the open support given by the French to the actual *Putsch* in Coblenz. On the arrival of the armed bands they were accommodated in French barracks. The acting Bürgermeister of Coblenz was informed by the Rhineland Commission that if the police used firearms to defend themselves against the Separatist attacks the French would disarm and arrest them.

After receiving the French assurance that the hands of authority had been safely tied, the Separatists advanced to storm the Rathaus. Several thousand of the population gathered to defend the building, and were fired on by the Separatists, two being killed and another wounded. The police were again warned by Colonel Phillippe not to shoot. During the night Separatist

reinforcements armed with carbines were sent up, and collected outside the station under the protection of French gendarmes.

This was a little too much for the British Deputy High Commissioner, my old chief, Colonel Ryan, to tolerate, and he urged M. Tirard to treat British representation with a little less contempt, and at least to have the carbines which were being carried openly taken away from these criminal "troops." After some discussion this was done, and the reinforcements withdrawn under French protection.

This was only a momentary check. M. Tirard revenged himself for the British intervention by ordering the German police to surrender their arms, and by an extremely brutal expulsion of forty leading officials, including the Chief Bürgermeister. Gendarmes appeared in their houses during the night, and, giving them ten minutes to say farewell to their families, took them to the station and expelled them from Occupied Territory.

French troops had the barbed-wire defences removed from the seat of the Regierungspräsident and expelled its volunteer defenders. The weapon which the Separatist had shown themselves unable to face in Bonn—clean water—projected through a fire-hose, had been prepared for them in Coblenz, but the French removed the hose. A curfew was proclaimed to keep the population indoors, and French gendarmes finally escorted the Separatists to a successful attack on Coblenz Schloss and Rathaus. Cavalry and Moroccan troops scattered

the crowds who collected to try and recover the buildings.

A former colleague of mine, the Marquis de Lillers, who had been attached to the British Commissioner in Cologne and was now French delegate in Wiesbaden, not only put the Separatist roughs by similar methods in possession of the public buildings, but actually addressed a letter (dated 22nd October) to the Chief of Police, saying: "Are the police prepared to state in writing their readiness to continue their functions and not to interfere with the supporters of the new *régime*?" Those who refused to sign, stated the letter, would be disarmed and expelled from Rhineland. The police, of course, refused and were arrested and disarmed. The Wiesbaden and Mainz Separatists particularly distinguished themselves by looting and plundering after they had been put into power.

After the storming of Crefeld Rathaus, which had been preceded by a thirty-six-hour siege by men armed with carbines and hand grenades, I was privileged to meet another distinguished Separatist leader, a soldier of fortune who told me frankly that he had no name, but preferred to be known as "The Captain." His ruffianly adjutant told me that his name was "Captain Parsifal"; he was identical with the man also called "Capitaine Arndt," who had trained the Separatist storm-troops before the *Putsch* under French protection at Düsseldorf.

The Rathaus had been badly damaged by rifle fire, and was completely ruined when I made

my way through the very worst armed mob which I encountered in any of the Separatist strongholds.

"I am a professional leader of *Putsche*," the broad-shouldered man with a sly but commanding manner told me; "I am not a politician. I am no German, but a French citizen of Polish birth," and he pointed proudly to the ribbon of the *médaille militaire* in his buttonhole. "I was brought to Rhineland three weeks ago to force through this Rhineland Republic, and am Commander-in-Chief of the Flying Army of the Rhine. My men are all armed to the teeth with machine-guns, rifles, hand grenades and revolvers, with unlimited ammunition.

"This is my trade. One of my finest achievements was the organization of the *Putsch* for the French and Poles in Upper Silesia. I have run revolutions for the Bolsheviks and 'White' revolutions against them. Discipline I learned as a regular officer years ago in the Prussian Army, and I handle my ruffians here with something worse than Prussian discipline.

"I arrived here this morning, and shall arrange from this centre the overthrow of the German authorities in surrounding towns. I have reassurances from the Belgians that all is going well. We shall print our own money; food is sent from Düsseldorf, and my orders come from Coblenz. My men will fight for anyone in the world who will feed and pay them, and will desert to the enemy when pay stops. So will I."

By flattering the strange vanity of this unique product, I and my old friend, Leigh Farnell

(formerly a colleague of mine on the High Commission, at this time Special Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*), led him to seek to impress us still further.

He took us in one of his stolen motor-cars to see a company parade. In the courtyard of the school were drawn up one hundred and fifty of the most dangerous-looking ruffians I have ever had the misfortune to meet. Among the specimens of every criminal and degenerate type on parade I failed to find one honest face. Neither the men nor "Capitaine Parsifal" wore uniform, but the way these hardened gaol-birds quailed when he barked at them like a Prussian sergeant-major showed that they recognized their master, without any badge of rank.

"Men of the Flying Army," he rasped out, "I am your Commander-in-Chief, and you will obey my every order. The Belgian delegate to-day complimented me on your discipline. Maintain it. I will shoot anyone caught plundering or requisitioning without my written authorization.

"Look at me well; I am Lord over Life and Death. Dismiss!"

"What weapons do you carry, M. le Capitaine?" I asked, "to secure your own life amongst the crowd which you handle so magnificently?"

"I am the only unarmed man here," he replied. "Did not your soldiers say in the war that they could only be hit by the one bullet which had their name written on it? My fatal bullet is named and dated. I can never dodge it—no other can hit me."

In the neighbouring towns of Neuss and

München-Gladbach I found preparations in full swing to meet the attack of "Captain Parsifal's" storm-troops, which followed that night.

München - Gladbach Rathaus had been a Benedictine monastery in the seventeenth century. Barbed-wire entanglements, sand-bags, and wire-netting bomb-nets contrasted oddly with the carved motto dating from monkish days over the entrance, *Pax intransitibus*. Four days previously the Separatists, who had appointed two ex-convicts as Bürgermeister and Police President, had been ejected by the population. Now the counter-attack was expected. Under Belgian protection, it was successfully carried out by the Separatists that night.

## CHAPTER XII

### "AS YOU WERE" IN AIX

THE days of Separatism, which seemed so firmly established in the Belgian zone, were numbered. Always distrustful of the French schemes, the Belgians began to change their policy under the influence of the firm British stand made in Paris and Brussels, where the Ambassadors informed the two Governments concerned that Great Britain would neither recognize the "Revolver Republic" nor allow its agents to create trouble in the British Zone of Occupation.

At Aix-la-Chapelle the German police made a night assault on the head-quarters of the Separatists, and ejected them without firing a shot. Immediately the Belgian gendarmerie opened fire on the German police, killing four of them, and reinstated the Separatists. Every day the terror of the Separatists was growing worse. Men and women hostages were carried off, shops and farms plundered, and the French lead given in seizing currency from the banks eagerly followed. The Belgians were obviously uncomfortable over the Press exposures of the reign of terror, but the French in Paris still blandly maintained that their attitude was one of neutrality.

In Düren I gathered a story of terrorism so



outrageous and so precise that my message to *The Times* was made the basis of a *démarche* by Lord Crewe, the British Ambassador in Paris.

At 11 p.m. one evening the Chief Bürgermeister, Dr. Overhues, was sitting with his wife and children when, without warning, rifle and revolver fire was opened on the house. The Bürgermeister himself and many townspeople whom I examined saw clearly Separatist and French Moroccan troops levelling their weapons at the house. His wife rescued their infant son from the bedroom, the windows of which had already been shattered by bullets, and carried him to the cellar. Dr. Overhues fled to the roof, lying there at full length while the Moroccans in vain tried to pick him off.

After an hour's shooting, during which the house was filled with the screams of terrified women and children, a French officer stopped the firing and put the Separatists in possession, stating as usual that neutrality prevented him from allowing their ejection. He refused to protect Dr. Overhues, who was dragged to the headquarters of Herr Matthes and there threatened with death. By the threat of a general strike the population procured the release of Dr. Overhues next day and he fled with his family to the British zone to put the facts before some British journalists. Leaving his family behind on our "island of peace," he then gallantly returned to face whatever might be in store for him in Düren.

The fullest confirmation of his story was given me on the spot by three French *Régie* workers and

their families who were billeted on Dr. Overhues and caught in the inferno of shooting. His only offence was that he had refused to print unbacked paper currency for the revolutionaries.

M. Tirard had the sardonic inspiration about this time to warn a German delegation of protest that the newspapers were publishing false reports concerning the arming of the Separatists. He cited me as a particularly shocking example of this sort of thing, but forebore to contest the accuracy of the camera employed by *The Times* photographer, who, under my guidance, assembled a unique pictorial record of the truth. The British Foreign Office was of a different opinion from M. Tirard concerning my veracity, and after receiving my assurance that I could guarantee the literal accuracy of my account of the Düren outrage, Lord Crewe took the action mentioned above.

To the disgust of the French, the Belgians, after one last morning of destruction and slaughter, finally threw the Separatists overboard. I arrived at Aix-la-Chapelle on 2nd November to find another bloodthirsty battle drawing to a close. Evidently the French had got wind of the Belgian intentions, and made a last desperate effort to confront their unwilling allies with a *fait accompli*. All night *Régie* trains had been bringing in storm-troops under the personal direction of Matthes, who commanded the Separatists in the French zone. By 5 a.m. the last armed ruffian had passed the Belgian officer supervising at the station, and at 7 a.m. the storm of the beautiful fourteenth-century Gothic Rathaus set in.

It was defended only by firemen, who had first been searched for arms by Lieutenant Peters' men to ensure that they could not defend themselves. When the storm began the acting Bürgermeister urged the Belgians to comply with their own Ordinances and disarm the attackers, or to allow the local police to deal with them. The Belgians refused to accept either suggestion. The Separatists opened the water hydrants, thus safeguarding themselves against their worst foe. From the adjoining houses a furious fire was opened by Separatist storm-troops with rifles and machine-guns, while the Belgian sentries looked on indifferently. Beautiful stained-glass windows were shattered and the fine stonework damaged by bullets and bombs. At 9.30 a.m. an assaulting party, covered by the fire of men behind barricades, rushed the building; the firemen hurled their last remaining weapons (bottles of wine and fire-extinguishing torches) on to the heads of the stormers, but in vain. The latter scaled the ladders and entered the building through a room in Belgian occupation which the Germans were not allowed to defend. The oaken doorways were smashed with a battering-ram. The firemen who had not been killed or wounded escaped through a back entrance.

While detachments of Separatist gunmen in motor-cars and motor-lorries were adding to the panic in the city by dashing around the streets, firing indiscriminately, I obtained admission to the captured Rathaus. A young Separatist carrying a bloodstained axe over his shoulder was kind enough to escort me round, to display with

obvious satisfaction the damage done by their attack. In the splendid Kaisersaal, the famous frescoes (below which stood the iron bedsteads and straw sacks of the defeated defenders) were pitted with bullet marks, and large patches were missing from them where the plaster had splintered from the wall. Fine old glass and pictures were ruined. Amidst the wreckage the victors sprawled over their weapons. After congratulating my escort on the brilliant victory, I went to see Fein. I found him in full Consular uniform on his way to present a strongly-worded protest to the Belgian authorities, coupled with a demand that immediate steps should be taken to protect British residents in Aix from the indiscriminate shooting and plundering of the motor-gunmen.

After lunching in a quiet street away from the zone of shooting, I strolled towards the Rathaus to see how events were progressing. I was dumb-founded at the sight that greeted me. In the main street was drawn up a long column of bewildered-looking men, the off-scourings of the prisons of Germany, Poland, France, Belgium and Russia. They stood resentful and perplexed between long files of Belgian cavalry. With set faces, the Belgian gendarmerie collected from them as they filed past a miscellaneous heap of murderous weapons. Their leaders tried to argue with their friends and employers of an hour before—the Belgian gendarmerie officers. They only got the reply : “ We cannot help ourselves ; we have orders from Brussels.” It was the dramatic end of Belgian co-operation in French annexation plans.



(Photo Gebrueder Mertens, Aachen.)

*Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) Rathaus : a fine fresco pitted  
with Separatist bullets*

While I had been at lunch, in fact, French Rhine policy had been deprived of its only hope of complete success. Thanks to the very urgent representation made that morning in Brussels by the British Minister, the Belgian Cabinet, after a sitting at which my dispatches to *The Times* were amongst the documents considered, sent imperative instructions to Baron Radzinsky-d'Ostrovitch, the Belgian Delegate at Aix of the Rhineland High Commission, to see that the Separatists were disarmed and removed from the Belgian zone that afternoon.

No public announcement had, of course, been made, but the news spread like wildfire. Thousands of citizens rushed to the scene eager to be avenged on their tormentors, but the Belgian gendarmerie charged the crowd, beating men and women unmercifully with their truncheons. The British Vice-Consul, who was erroneously supposed to have brought about the liberation of the town, was dragged from his motor-car and, despite his protests, carried shoulder-high by wildly-cheering Germans into the ruined Rathaus, now restored to the city.

The Separatist mercenaries marched off singing defiantly. Two of them who had managed to retain revolvers left their last mark on the city by shooting down two harmless citizens. The two shots proved the last straw; the two Separatists were cut off by the crowd, despite the Belgian escort, and lynched in the street; others were badly beaten.

From a German medical man who at the risk

of his life gained admission as a spy to the stronghold of Deckers in Aix-la-Chapelle, I obtained an interesting first-hand story of conditions there. A Belgian Sûreté official had acted as watch-dog, and told the Separatists that the caller was a suspicious character who had better be arrested. He was flung into a cell with a dozen other victims, who had been beaten black and blue by Separatists. Another German loyalist (who had been detected) the doctor saw stripped and beaten into unconsciousness every few hours to make him disclose the names of other members of the counter-espionage organizations. It was also interesting that after my informant had succeeded in restoring confidence in himself and been given work among the Separatists, he saw M. Tirard himself arrive and have a private conversation with Deckers. This information was confirmed by an American journalist, who was in the ante-room at the same time.

On the same day as the *volte-face* took place in Aix the Separatists were expelled from every other town and village in the Belgian zone. My friend, "Parsifal-Arndt," was compelled to haul down the flag of treachery at Crefeld amidst the frantic cheers of the population. M. Rolin-Jacquemyns, the Belgian High Commissioner, informed Matthes that the brutality of his armed gangs towards the population had caused the Belgians to take legitimate action against them. He refused to discuss this action or to have any negotiations with a "government" which existed neither *de facto* nor *de jure*. Henceforth the Belgians, who

by their courage in breaking away from the domination of the French had done much to wipe out the scandal of their earlier co-operation, became the Allies of Germany and Great Britain in the struggle to checkmate French designs on the Rhine.



## CHAPTER XIII

### "SPEAK, HANDS, FOR ME"

BELGIUM'S defection broke the back of the "Rhineland Republic," but it did not at once put an end to the terror in any part of the French Occupied Area. In the Rhineland proper, however, the French had to accept defeat. They "saved face" by making no change for the moment and allowing terrorism to continue, but gradually they permitted many of their discredited agents to slip back into the underworld whence they had come, after depriving them of their arms. At the same time, M. Paul Tirard completely changed his attitude in the negotiations which he had all along been carrying on with influential but timorous Rhinelanders, whom he had hoped to scare into taking matters into their own hands and into establishing a presentable "Rhenish Republic."

Until the "Revolver Republic" had been smashed, at his strictly confidential meetings with these personages, M. Tirard had flatly refused to be satisfied with the idea of a separate Rhenish State independent of Prussia which should remain a member of the Federal Union of German States. Now he became more modest, and from his modesty in adversity may be judged the extent of

his ambitions in the hey-day of his glory. Early in November he told certain faint-hearts from Cologne that France was now prepared to accept a separate Federal State within the Reich in lieu of complete separation from Germany. It would have to differ from the other States, however, in having a customs barrier against the rest of Germany, a separate tariff, a French-controlled currency, railways which would be in the hands of "a foreign Power," a foreign military occupation, and would have to be placed under the rule of the Rhineland Commission.

It would have diplomatic representation in Paris. Its bank of issue would have thirty to thirty-five per cent. French capital, fifteen per cent. International, and fifty per cent. German. The well-known Cologne banker, Herr Louis Hagen, Herr Otto Wolf and other prominent Rhinelanders were persuaded to take this ambitious French scheme very seriously, and it came within an ace of realization. Only by postponing a decision from month to month were the Germans enabled finally to save the Rhineland in the general settlement at the London Conference.

When the French abandoned both the Separatists and the idea of complete separation of the Rhineland proper, they began to pursue precisely the reverse policy in one part of their zone—the province of the Bavarian Palatinate. M. Poincaré was obviously determined that however France might have to modify her ambitions, this important territory bordering on Alsace-Lorraine, in which from the start the most unblushing

Separatist and even open annexationist propaganda had been carried on, should never return to Germany. So outrageous was the reign of terror of the French and the Separatists here at the end of 1923, that in December a deputation of civic representatives from all over the area actually came to Coblenz and implored the intervention—naturally in vain—of Lord Kilmarnock, the British High Commissioner. Early in January, 1924, I took the first opportunity afforded me by a lull on the other "fronts" to visit this most harassed of German provinces.

General de Metz, the Commander-in-Chief of the French troops in the Palatinate, had since taking over the command in 1920 been the most active and frank exponent of a barely-disguised annexation. Even before the *Putsch* at Aix-la-Chapelle gave the signal for methods of open violence to be employed, General de Metz had achieved such success that he had for a time won over the Social-Democratic leader, Hoffman, to agree to separation from Bavaria, with the object (on Hoffman's part) of putting an end to persecution and saving the Palatinate for the Reich, while freeing it from the control of the German reactionaries who ruled in Munich.

At the outbreak of the general *Putsch*, a discontented "pothouse politician," the farmer Heinz, of Orbis, was appointed "General Commissar of the Palatinate" by Dorten. Unlike most of his colleagues, he was less of a knave than a fool, though this did not prevent him from becoming a very active traitor to his country. The Social-

Democrats promptly dropped Hoffman, joining with all the other parties in refusing the direct demand of General de Metz to form a Palatinate Republic. Thereupon, as he later told a distinguished prelate, he "let all the devils of hell loose on the Palatinate."

The devils in question were, as usual, transported by the French *Régie*. The French authorities requisitioned arms for them, gave them sleeping quarters and barracks. They proclaimed a curfew as the Separatists approached in order to keep all volunteer defenders at home. They ordered the dissolution of the hurriedly-formed Citizen Defence Corps, arrested its leaders, ordered the removal of all barbed-wire defences before public buildings and escorted their protégés up to the attack. Under these circumstances the "conquest" of the Palatinate was completed between 5th November and 3rd December, 1923. At Speyer, the capital of the Palatinate, the French posted Moroccan sentries in the rear of the attacking Separatists so that the German defenders of the Regierung building could not return the murderous fire of the latter without exposing themselves to a charge of firing on the French. After the capture of the Regierung the French put a company of infantry on duty patrolling the neighbourhood of the building to protect the victorious storm-troops from a counter-attack.

To see the local authorities of the Palatinate, I was compelled to go to Unoccupied Territory, for by now everyone but a few quite subordinate officials had been expelled. I found the real

Government of the province in exile at the beautiful old city of Heidelberg. The tale of violence and of guile, supported by the evidence of the actual victims who were also in exile and by documents which they had to unfold was a shocking one.

The law of their country no longer ran in their own province, but as visible protest against the usurpers, they kept up the form of issuing regulations.

Under the ruined walls of Heidelberg Castle (in itself a monument to the efficacy of a previous French occupation, for it was General Mélaç who blew it up in 1689), I found another little body of men whose writ to some extent did run in the Palatinate—the members of the Palatinate Defence Committee or “Pfalzzentrale.” I had only a vague knowledge of the actual nature of their activities at the time, but I realized that they were encouraging the weary and dispirited population of the Palatinate to be of good heart. Many young students at the peril of their lives were smuggling in newspapers from Heidelberg, for the French had now suppressed every single newspaper in the Palatinate. Money to replace the confiscated bank-notes was also being taken across the Rhine by this volunteer secret service—other things also, of which I knew nothing, but of which I was soon to learn. At the head of the bureau was a German ex-captain of cavalry, whom it is perhaps fairer to call merely the Hauptman Ritter von K.

After making himself extremely pleasant, he

wished me good luck in the Palatinate and a safe return.

"You are going at a most critical moment," he said. "I suppose I should envy you the journalistic experience—I hope it may not prove too unpleasant."

A Roman Catholic priest, one of his agents, who may be held to be adequately described as "Pater X," was going across on a secret mission that night to Speyer, and promised to look me up in my hotel there next day and put me in touch with the half-dozen or so people in the town who were not too terrified to talk—of course, in strict confidence—to a foreign journalist.

My next few days were a revelation in what real terrorism meant when applied by a *de Metz*. Pater X himself was, of course, unwilling, both for my sake and his own, to be seen with me in the city, but he made a series of circumspect appointments for me to see the few prominent persons—mostly clergy protected by their cloth—who had not yet been expelled or imprisoned. With complete contempt for the High Commission Ordinances, the French allowed uniformed Separatists to parade the town with carbines slung across their shoulders and to mount guard in view of their sentries. The *Regierung* building itself was a fortress bristling with machine-guns and sharp-shooters.

Along the banks of the Rhine French and Separatist patrols co-operated in taking pot shots at any of the Heidelberg students caught swimming the Rhine—for at Speyer the opposite

bank was "unoccupied" — with news and instructions from Occupied Territory in waterproof containers. All the streets of this old German city had been given French names. In the countryside hundreds of peasant-mayors had been arrested and expelled, not by the French alone, but actually by the Separatist usurpers of power, for refusing to sign declarations of loyalty to the "Government of the Autonomous Palatinate." Many of them had first been threatened with death and put through physical torture in the Regierung at Speyer, where their pitiful cries reached the ears of many persons living in nearby houses whom I interviewed. Their farms and their property had been seized and stolen. By such methods several hundred declarations of loyalty had been extorted from the more pusillanimous. Such were conditions in Speyer that no one of "arrestable age" dared to be seen with me, so my guides and introducers were usually small girls and boys.

On 22nd December M. Tirard had officially informed the Rhineland High Commission that "the Autonomous Government of the Palatinate had been formed on 11th November." On 2nd January various "decrees" and other "official" documents of this "government" were formally laid before the Rhineland High Commission and duly registered. This was an extremely serious matter, for under the Ordinances the resolution registering these documents, after being transmitted by the High Commissioners to their respective Governments, became valid after the

lapse of ten days unless denounced in the meantime. The completion of this process would have amounted to a *de facto* recognition that the Palatinate had seceded from Germany and become a separate State.

There were just three more days to run before this came about when, on the night of 9th January, I decided to leave the Palatinate. On my way back from an interview in the afternoon with the aged Archbishop of Speyer I met Pater X at a quiet corner and informed him of my intention.

"Are you a keen journalist?" he asked me. "Do you mind taking a little risk to get a good 'story' as you call it? If so, don't leave Speyer to-night, and for heaven's sake forget that I have spoken to you."

I urged him to be more explicit, but in vain.

"Interesting events may happen quite soon," he said, "but I can tell you nothing more because I know nothing more. I just have a feeling."

I jumped to the conclusion that the priest's "feeling" was the knowledge that a counter-attack was to be delivered at dusk on the Separatists in the Regierung. I could not imagine how such a mad enterprise could succeed amidst a cowed population and under the muzzles of both French and Separatist machine-guns, but I naturally cancelled my departure and told the merry little landlord at the Wittelsbacher Hof—the only man, I think, who could still laugh in Speyer—that I was staying a few days longer.

I was just finishing my dinner that night at a



quarter past nine in the little dining-room of the old coaching-inn in company with about thirty other guests when four young men followed the waiter into the room. At the table opposite to me sat Heinz, who was now dignified by the title of "President of the Autonomous Palatinate," together with three other members of his dummy "cabinet." I had seen them sitting there every night over their wine—that wonderful *vin ordinaire* of the Palatinate which seems to hold the sparkle of its brilliant sunshine, the warmth of its low volcanic hills and the fragrance of its abundant grapes in every drop. I was meditating crossing over to their table and seeing what information my laboriously acquired and invaluable Franco-German accent would enable me to pick up, as the waiter turned to the young men standing by my table to say :

"In a moment, *meine Herren*, I will find you a table."

I probably owe my life to the fact that I had not translated my meditation into action. At the table next to me sat a visitor registered in the hotel as "Doctor Weiss." As the waiter left in search of a table for the young men "Doctor Weiss" sprang to his feet, flinging his chair to the ground with a crash and, pointing a Mauser at the table where the Separatist "Cabinet" was sitting, bellowed in stentorian tones :

"Hands up ! Everyone stand to the wall."

In a flash the four young men had surrounded the table indicated by his revolver. The Separatists sprang up and fumbled for their own weapons,



(Photo Fritz Egem, Speyer)

*The body of "President" Heinz lying in the Speyer restaurant after his assassination*



(Photo Hesse, Pirmasens)

*The Pirmasens horror: flames consume the Bezirksamt with its Separatist garrison by night*

"REVENGE ON THE TRAITORS"

but before they could draw them half a dozen shots rang out. Heinz had barely risen to his feet when a bullet passed through the back of his head. He spun round on his heels and dropped flat on his back, stone dead. Two other men of his company tottered forward to the next table and fell, blood streaming from their faces.

More shots followed, the reek of powder filled the room, women screamed wildly and men in their terror dropped beneath the tables. Two shots rang out in the street and the windows splintered.

I had been deep in my notes when the shout of "Hands up!" broke the gentle hum of restaurant conversation. The whole scene was completely unreal to me, and although instinctively I stood to the wall and put my hands up with the others as the shooting began, I was not conscious of moving of my own free will. My predominant feeling was :

"If someone were really to walk in and assassinate the Separatist leaders, it would seem just like this sensational film in which somehow I seem to be playing a part."

By the time fifteen or twenty shots had been fired and the windows splintered by flying bullets it had become real enough even to me, and I made a bolt for cover at the open doorway leading into the bar. As I stood here one of the young men walked up close to me, a smoking revolver in his hand, and put his hand on the switch controlling the electric light of the building.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "we apologize for the shock we have been obliged to give you. It was the only way of settling the score with the

traitors who had betrayed our country. No one else will be touched. The lights must remain out for fifteen minutes, and during that period everyone must keep his hands up or he will be immediately shot. Long live United Germany."

As he finished, the hotel was plunged into complete darkness, in which the wailing of terrified women, the sobbing of unnerved men and the dreadful sound of two of the victims gasping out their lives in pools of their own blood seemed more horrible than before. There was a patter of running feet outside, a challenge, an answering shout, half-a-dozen shots and the thud of a falling body. Then the patter of feet receded into the distance. . . .

Someone switched on the light. There were cries of "Switch it off—we shall all be murdered!" Someone plunged us into darkness again. A woman screamed, "Light! Light! I shall go mad!" and the lights were on once again. The landlord stood near me, whimpering with terror, his merry laugh of normal times a thing unimaginable. We stood looking stupidly at one another, each wondering which of us was the assassin waiting to shoot the other down if he lowered his hand. Then the truth dawned upon me—that we had been bluffed and that there was nobody left to cover the retreat. I called out loudly in German :

"If any gentleman of the raiding party is present, will he please note that I am merely going to light a cigarette," which, lowering my hands, I proceeded to do, despite the nervous protest of the landlord.

Suddenly the door of the hall opened and a man staggered in, his face and clothing drenched in blood which was streaming from a wound in the skull. The horrified guests screamed and drew away from this horrid apparition. Only the little potboy found the pluck to help me put the dying Separatist (a man named Lilienthal) in a chair. Then it seemed time to attend to my job and verify what was certainly an "exclusive sensation."

In the dining-room itself five bodies were lying around the Separatist table and the wall was pitted with bullet marks. I examined four of the victims to establish their identity, for there was obviously nothing to be done for them, save to move the head of one who was lying face downwards drowning in his own blood. Before I could do so, however, something happened which terrified me more than any event of that memorable night.

The fifth "body" arose, its face streaming with blood like the others, and walking towards me, said in indignant but matter-of-fact tones :

"*Ich danke schön!* Thank you very much indeed. This is a nice way to treat a man who only came to Speyer this morning to sell shirts. I had just sat down by chance at the table with these poor creatures, and then this happened. I believe I have lost two teeth."

He had. A bullet had passed right through both cheeks and done no further damage to the luckless "bagman," who was the only innocent person sitting at the traitors' table, and the only one who (little the worse for his wound) outlived the night.

At this moment the door opened, and a pale, shaking figure came in which I recognized at once as Heinz's "Press Minister," Schmitz, generally known as Schmitz-Eppers. He had been delayed at his office that night, or he would have shared the fate of his friends. He could hardly stand upright from terror, and at first looked at me as though he expected me to shoot him down at any minute. I reassured him and asked him to help me move the man who was lying face downwards and still breathing chokingly. But his brain was quite incapable of conveying any command to his limbs, and he clung to my arm, whimpering:

"No, no, I cannot touch them, *Lieber Herr*. For God's sake stay with me!" As it was my business to get this "story" over the telephone by hook or by crook to London and not to comfort terror-stricken plotters, I had to shake the fellow off forcibly.

A minute later the hotel was invaded by uniformed men—French troops, black and white, gendarmerie, and a mob of Separatists. Naturally no one was allowed to leave the building. The Speyer telephone service stopped at ten o'clock, and my only hope of getting out my "story" was to see the German officials at the post office and get them to grant me an extension. It was, however, already ten before I could persuade the French gendarmerie officer to make an exception for me and allow me to go out to the post office.

It was not the pleasantest walk imaginable through the dark streets, completely emptied of citizens by the ten o'clock curfew, but patrolled

by armed ruffians searching feverishly for a gang of determined assassins. Three times in a walk that would normally take six minutes, the challenge: "Halt! Hands up!" rang out from behind the menacing muzzles of revolvers or rifles, and I had to submit to a close body-search for arms by members of Heinz's cut-throat gang or by French gendarmes.

Eventually I reached the post office. After half an hour's argument with a German official of the old type, who refused to help me even on being offered what was a fortune in German currency—£5—but finally consented on the strength of my Press pass from the German Foreign Office to put through a special call to *The Times* office in Paris, I returned to the Wittelsbacher Hof to await the call.

In the hotel a stranger stopped me and, as "a member of the 'Autonomous Government,'" demanded to see my passport. I refused, saying that I was an Englishman and not prepared to produce my papers to the first unauthorized person who felt some curiosity about me. He replied:

"Englishmen do not count here any more; we have seized the reins of government."

At this moment Schmitz-Eppers appeared. Surrounded by his troops and French gendarmes, the trembling coward of twenty minutes before was a roaring lion of courage. A French gendarme told me to produce my French Press pass. When Schmitz-Eppers caught sight of the name of *The Times* on it he began to storm.

"It is more than significant," he said, "that *The Times*, our greatest enemy, should have been so well informed of these assassinations. You will be arrested and taken to our head-quarters, where we can investigate to what extent you were an accomplice in this crime."

I knew only too well what form a Separatist investigation usually took — torture, frequently followed by a "regrettable accident," when a prisoner would, unfortunately, be "shot in an attempt to escape." I caught sight of the commander of the French gendarmerie, showed him my British passport, and reminded him that since Great Britain regarded the Separatists as no government, but a mob of usurpers, the French, as the local executive of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission of which Great Britain was a member, were bound to afford me protection against such disorderly elements. He coldly agreed, and privately advised Schmitz-Eppers to leave me in peace.

By this time the telephone bell was ringing and I tried to get into the box, which was guarded by a villainous person with a naked cutlass in his hands. I again called upon the French officer and urged him to stop this interference with the telephone, but he shrugged his shoulders and said :

"Unfortunately we are obliged to afford you that protection to life and limb that you claim, but do not expect me to lift a finger to help you beyond that." This seemed reasonable enough.

Schmitz-Eppers, my chief enemy, was now out of sight, and I managed to bully his deputy into



letting me enter the telephone-box. He first found an English-speaking Separatist, who came into the box with me, revolver in hand, ready to cut the connection if I uttered a word against the "Autonomous Government." Two burly ruffians, armed, one with a rifle and the other with a cutlass, were stationed outside the glass door to support him. Under these circumstances it was impossible to give the column "story" which I had written explaining fully the crimes of these people which had preceded the assassination, and I had to content myself with a couple of brief paragraphs dictated as well as possible over the telephone, with my censor's finger always on the hook to cut the connection if I uttered a word of criticism of the Separatists.

It was impossible to sleep a wink during that night of alarm, although after I had given my evidence to the gendarmerie officer I was left in peace.

\* \* \* \* \*

Early next morning I got a message asking me to go into the hotel kitchen. Here a schoolgirl asked me if I would come for a walk with her outside the town, as a friend had something important to tell me. It might, of course, have been a Separatist trick, but I suspected—rightly—that it was my clerical friend, Pater X. He met me at the appointed spot, and took me to a certain religious building which I will not specify further. Here, over coffee and rolls served by a nun who was in the secret, I heard something of the story of the assassination (which, of course,

the good Pater assured me, he had only picked up that morning by pure accident).

"Dr. Weiss" had been sent across the river to spy out the land and discover where the traitor "Cabinet" could most easily be shot down before the fateful 12th January, when their "Autonomous Palatinate" was to have been recognized. Couriers swimming the Rhine by night had kept him in communication with head-quarters in Heidelberg. During the day of the assassination six or eight assistants who were prepared to cover the retreat of the actual assassins had been got together and were posted at various tables in the dining-room on the night. Others guarded the doors and the main control switch of the electric light. A party of eight young men rowed swiftly across the Rhine from Unoccupied Territory at nine o'clock. Two guarded the boat, two patrolled the line of retreat through the streets of Speyer, and the four detailed for the assassination, who did not know even the appearance of their intended victims, came into the hotel and, taking their cue from "Dr. Weiss," shot down the men he indicated. The covering party scattered about the dining-room was prepared to deal in the last resort with any French officers who might have been present and have tried to intervene.

By chance Colonel Richier, the head of the French Secret Service, was actually dining there in plain clothes. He wisely gave no trouble. One of my French friends on the High Commission at Coblenz laughingly remarked to the Colonel a few days later :

"You know, we should be giving you a bar to your medal for having been present at the 'Battle of the Wittelsbacher Hof,' but when Tirard heard that the detestable Gedye was also there he dropped the project lest he should claim a decoration also. I suppose Gedye was coward enough to put his hands up when the shooting began?"

"I am sorry I cannot tell you that," replied Colonel Richier, "for I myself was under the table."

After the assassinations, when the lights were turned out, Pater X told me, the four assassins rushed out of the hotel into the street, to be confronted by half a dozen Separatists who had heard the shooting, and came up at the double, carbines in hand. There was an exchange of shots. One of the raiding party was shot through the heart and lies to-day in a nameless grave in Speyer awaiting the moment when it will be safe to put his name on the tombstone and on the roll of German patriots. Another was shot through the leg, and his companions dragged him as best they could down to the boat in which the whole party made good its escape across the Rhine. The mortally-wounded Separatist, Lilienthal, whom the potboy and I had assisted to a chair, had been shot in this brush at the door of the hotel.

I crossed the Rhine that morning to Un-occupied Territory only just in time, for that evening the French again closed to everyone the bridge connecting occupied Ludwigshafen with

unoccupied Mannheim, in their belated attempts to catch the assassins.

After telephoning in comfort the full story of the preceding night I went on to Heidelberg to see the German cavalry officer, Hauptmann Ritter von K., who was still sitting in the centre of his web under the walls of Heidelberg Castle. He made no secret of the fact that he was the organizer of the successful raid on the traitors' camp.

"Believe me," he said, "it is a real pleasure to find we managed to avoid killing you and to see you alive and unhurt. I was seriously concerned about you, for it might have done us great damage to have killed a British journalist, and after all, in an affair like that, all sorts of accidents are possible. Naturally we could not give you any warning. Personally, I would gladly have put off the raid until you had left Speyer, but you know how it was in the war—once a trench-raid had been planned it had to come off, even if you knew that the enemy had spotted your gunners cutting the wire and had trained a dozen machine-guns on to the gap. So you just had to take your chance of a stray bullet. However, all's well that ends well, and I hope you will set off the value of your exclusive news story against the risks in which my decision may have involved you."

The action taken in Bavaria to convey an appearance of legality to the assassinations was rather curious. The day *after* the murders the Public Prosecutor of the Würzburg Volksgericht

issued an order (which would not, of course, have been executed in any case in French Occupied Territory) for the arrest of nineteen persons, including Heinz, of Orbis, "for crimes punishable under an Ordinance of the Bavarian Cabinet dated 11th May, 1923, with death, namely high treason."

In the *Münchener Augsburger Zeitung* of 17th January, 1924, the Munich Professor of Jurisprudence, Professor Doerr, declared that it was impossible to prosecute the assassins.

"Every German," he wrote, "is entitled to take every possible step in defending his country against illegal attacks and against treason. Effective resistance may also include the putting of the guilty out of the world. If those who fired the shots on 9th January only desired to hinder criminals in the continuation of their crimes, they are not murderers in the sense of the criminal law."

Naturally, there was never any prosecution instituted in Germany of "Dr. Weiss" and his "raiding party."

The so-called "*Pfalzzentrale*," which plotted the assassinations from Heidelberg, was founded by the Bavarian Government to fight Separatist treachery. In May, 1924, it was closed by order of the Baden Government, on whose territory it was operating, as a result of Entente protests. Kanzler, one of the leaders of the Einwohnerwehr, stated in evidence before the Reichstag Committee on the activities of the German Secret Societies:

"I heard that a high Bavarian official put up six thousand marks to finance this raid on Heinz

and the Separatists. Further investigation of this matter might lead to a scandal of European importance."

In commenting on the debate in the Bavarian Diet on the question of an amnesty for political crimes committed by secret German organizations, a Nationalist, Dr. Wilhelm Frick, wrote in the *Völkische Beobachter* of 13th March, 1928:

"Since the representatives of this highly-religious Bavarian People's Party [Clericals] declared to-day that they would not vote an amnesty [for political crimes] let me recall to their memory the assassination of Heinz by five courageous men. I do not want to go into the question of who ordered the murders and of who financed them. A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse. I hope these remarks will be enough to make this Party see reason, without obliging me to speak so clearly that one of the shining lights of this Party who is occupying a high official position could find himself dragged through the mud."

## CHAPTER XIV

### PURIFICATION BY FIRE

THE battle between the French and British for the control of the railways in the British zone called me back to Cologne, and, unfortunately, prevented me from meeting Mr. Clive, the British Consul-General at Munich, whom the Foreign Office, to the consternation of the French, now sent into the Palatinate to report on the situation. Mr. Ronald McNeill was too considerate of French feelings to give Mr. Clive's report to the world, but his telegram, which was read out in the House of Commons, showed that despite all the efforts of the French to prevent him unearthing the truth he had obtained a pretty clear view of the situation. He ascertained that 90 per cent. of the population was opposed to the Separatists, that the "Autonomous Government" could never have come into existence without French assistance, and would be driven out the day that assistance was withdrawn, and that, as Bley, Heinz's successor, admitted, 75 per cent. of their supporters were not natives of the Palatinate and included many criminals and incompetents.

From this date the French outside the Palatinate turned their backs on the Separatists and refused to let the gangs of desperadoes

settle anywhere. My old acquaintance, "Captain Parsifal," performed one last good service to his French employers by sending several hundred of his wretched men from Honeff on the Rhine into the Siebengebirge on a hopeless plundering expedition against the peasants of the hill country, who were awaiting them. As they passed through a narrow gorge in motor-lorries, the peasants rolled rocks down upon them, fired at them from the cover of the trees with shot guns and rifles, and cut down with scythes those who fled into the woods. By sending the motor-lorries at long intervals, their commander ensured that few of his unhappy "troops" should escape alive from the slaughter on the Aegidien Berg.

In the Palatinate General de Metz refused to give up his ambition. He attended the funeral of Heinz, laying a wreath on the coffin of the man whom he saluted as "the true friend of France." None of the clergy of the Palatinate would officiate. French officers endeavoured to force signatures to a document contradicting Mr. Clive's report and "victimized" those Germans who had made statements to him. There was constant fighting in villages and towns where the population tried to expel the Separatists, and several more prominent traitors were assassinated by members of the Nationalist secret organizations.

In the town of Pirmasens, in the Western Palatinate, the Separatist Commissar, Schwaab, terrorized the citizens for a month with the open support of the French delegate. Murders committed by the Separatists went unpunished



and the German police were prohibited from even investigating them.

On 12th February I left Cologne for Pirmasens to investigate the terrorism there, and my experience served to confirm both the joking tribute of my colleagues, that I had an infallible journalistic nose for blood, and the perfectly serious accusation of the French, that I was at one with the German Secret Service operations against the traitors. For that same day the town rose up against its tormentors and killed many of them after a most savage struggle.

Sharp orders had been sent to General de Metz from Paris to see that the Separatists evacuated public buildings in the Palatinate. With an amazing *volte-face*, the General issued a statement to the Press that he realized that the Separatists were without public support and that he had little interest in the whole question, "which was one for diplomats, not for soldiers."

In Pirmasens the Separatists declined to withdraw under a guarantee of safe conduct. At midday on 13th February huge crowds gathered in the streets, insisting on the liberation of the city, but Schwaab replied by opening fire. After several people had been killed the attackers threw straw and cans of petrol into the lower windows of the Separatist head-quarters and set the building alight. The French took no notice whatever.

The garrison of forty Separatists, realizing that the French had abandoned them and that they could not fight the flames, now shouted from the

lower windows, begging for mercy, but were greeted with savage howls by the maddened crowd. As the former made a desperate sally, headed by Schwaab, they were struck down by hatchets and cudgels and beaten or kicked to death, while a number were seized and hurled back into the flames and burned to death. At the mortuary that night I watched blood-drunken crowds fighting like savages with one another to get into the little building to assure themselves that their tormentors really lay there dead. French agents quickly called the attention of the local commandant to my presence in Pirmasens. He had me arrested by the gendarmerie and taken to their headquarters. After I had had a long telephone conversation with him, in the course of which he defended his Separatists and threw all the blame on the savagery of the population (ignoring the provocation), he allowed me to go my way.

On my way back through Speyer I called again at the Wittelsbacher Hof, to find in the visitors' list the name of my former colleague on the Rhineland Commission, Captain H. V. Berry. The little landlord, full of happiness once again, told me joyfully that Berry was one of three members of an Inter-Allied Commission which had arrived that evening to put an end to Separatism in the Palatinate.

This was yet another lucky accident for me. During the four days they were at work I was able to telephone a full story nightly, thanks to Berry, who kept me informed at midnight visits paid secretly to his bedroom, for it was impossible

for him to admit before his French and Belgian colleagues that the notorious *Times* correspondent was known to and receiving information from him. I chummed up with a couple of Belgian railway officials so as not to attract the attention of Berry's colleagues at meal-times by sitting solitary at a table in the quiet inn.

On the Saturday when the Commission's labours came to an end a number of other journalists and officials came down to Speyer. Among them was M. Tirard's *aide-de-camp*, who knew me. At dinner he walked across to the French major on the Commission and said to him, indicating me :

"You know who that is, I suppose ?"

"Yes, he is a lazy Belgian railwayman who seems to have had nothing to do but play cards and smoke with his two colleagues ever since we have been here."

"A slight mistake," replied M. Tirard's *aide* : "That is our friend Gedye, *The Times* correspondent, who has been cabling your proceedings daily."

The poor French major made one effort to continue dinner, looked at me again, choked, dropped his knife and fork, gave Berry one long look and retired to bed.

Next day the Separatists finally disappeared, although de Metz made many covert but unsuccessful efforts to replace them. Some months later I returned to Speyer for the last time, just to make a general survey of the position. When the landlord saw me arriving a look of consternation spread over his face.

“ You are welcome enough personally,” he said, “ but I shall be thankful to see the last of you. The first time you came here five men were shot in my dining-room. The second time the Bezirksamt at Pirmasens was burnt down together with the majority of its Separatist garrison. Last time our accursed ‘ Autonomous Government ’ was deposed. Can you wonder that I ask myself: ‘ What is going to happen to us this time? ’ ”

## CHAPTER XV

### LIQUIDATION

THE story of the bitter, but outwardly courteous Franco-British conflict in the Rhineland concerning the British zone can only be touched briefly. At the beginning of the occupation of the Ruhr the French were as glad as their opponents to have the moral support of our presence. Each side laid siege to British sympathy, each relied on our moderation to restrain the bitterness of the other. But as the struggle developed the British became a thorn in the flesh to the French. The fact that the Germans on the whole "got a square deal" in Cologne both heartened them in their desperate struggle, and by contrast exposed the more openly to the world the horrors of the French deportations and manipulation of the Separatists. French officials and the French Press did not hesitate to accuse the British of making Cologne "the centre of German resistance," when, in fact, our official neutrality was heavily biased in favour of the French. Supplies for their invading troops and reinforcements for these came in part over the British zone lines, and the British yielded a section of line to exclusive French control as early as February, 1923, to help them to be independent of us.

Far from reciprocating, they did everything possible to squeeze out the British Occupation when it became obnoxious to them. There were even cases where British traders whom they suspected of failing to comply with their illegal commercial measures were flung into prison. The position of British trade in the Cologne area became so hopeless that the cartoon which *Punch* published of "John Bull's Other Island," showing Cologne ringed round by French bayonets and our traders unable to import or export was the best possible description of the situation.

Reichsbank money intended for the British area, and even on one or two occasions sums intended for the British Army of the Rhine, were seized. To the anger of the French, the Reichsbank finally sent money for Cologne by airplane to London and thence by air to Cologne. Only thanks to extreme pressure brought to bear by the British on the Germans were the French able to have any trains conducted by the German railwaymen through the Cologne area. Yet goods merely in transit through the French and Belgian areas from England to Cologne were refused reciprocal exemption by the French from the "war measures" of the Franco-German struggle. The Germans, on the other hand, made the concessions that goods imported from England on a French licence would not be confiscated in Unoccupied Territory as "tainted by treachery," as was done with all other goods which had paid French instead of German duties.

The greatest humiliation for Britain was the

establishment by the French of a chain of posts in Unoccupied Territory, completely cutting off the British zone. To pass between it and Germany, Englishmen and others had to submit to examination and even to search by Moroccan and other French troops. More than once impatience on both sides resulted in physical violence and even in occasional shooting incidents. The troubles of the British, sitting helpless and humiliated on their "other island" were added to by the muddles created by the triple chain of French bureaucrats—the Bad Ems Import and Export Licensing Committee working under the Rhineland Commission, the military posts (controlled by General Degoutte) and the *Régie* controls, who were all jealous of one another and frequently refused to recognize one another's permits.

British prestige did not stand very high in either Germany, France or Belgium during this humiliating epoch. At the end of 1923 the Cologne *Tageblatt*, which at the moment was called by the German Nationalists the organ of the "drawing-room Separatists," even began to urge the British to abandon opposition to the French schemes, to allow the latter to attain victory and the Rhineland to surrender, after which both sides could get back to business. An agreement regulating the position of the Cologne railways painfully arrived at between British, French and German officials on the spot was rejected in Paris in January, 1924, by M. Poincaré, who was determined to add the British zone railways to the rest of the system which he had seized. When the British Government

stood firm, the *Regie* actually blockaded the British zone, allowing nothing else but foodstuffs and military transport to pass. For once Great Britain refused to yield, and in February M. Poincaré had to allow the original agreement to go through.

With the collapse of Separatism a period was set to French ambitions in Rhineland. The remaining history of the Occupation must be sought outside that province—at Paris, where the defeat of M. Poincaré and the appearance of M. Herriot at the helm of France allowed Europe to breathe freely again; at London, where the London Conference undertook the liquidation of the wasteful and destructive campaign in Rhineland and the Ruhr; and at Locarno, and in the chronicles of the Dawes and Young Plans.

The path was a long and thorny one. That the French adventure was both wasteful and useless seems hardly open to question. Even if Germany be credited with the firm intention of evading every one of her Treaty obligations, there was—and is to-day—a whole armoury of weapons at the disposal of the Allies acting in concert to force her to submit to the riveting-on of her shackles yet more firmly.

The liquidation of the confusion and destruction caused by France's malevolent independent action was a long and difficult business. To the last, even when Paris had seen reason, the French civil and military authorities on the Rhine cherished the hope that they would be authorized to resume the interrupted work of six years of intrigues to



wrest the Rhine Provinces from Germany. The Separatists were not only protected in Occupied Territory from prosecution for high treason. A number of prominent traitors had been seized and carried off by secret agents for trial in Unoccupied Territory. One of them, a man named Hilferich, was seized, bound and gagged, and placed in a motor-ambulance strapped to a stretcher. At the "frontier" the German masquerading as ambulance man showed the poor "patient" to the French sentries at Ludwigshafen, who looked compassionately at the goggling eyes of the Separatist, with a blanket drawn up to his nose, and let him pass—into Heidelberg prison! All these men the Germans were compelled, by French threats of reprisals on unoffending German citizens in Occupied Territory, to release and allow to return to their French patrons.

The French managed to hinder even the prosecution of the former Separatists for criminal offences, such as robbery with violence, the issue of counterfeit money, assault and murder, while at the same time they kept in gaol for six months and more the loyal German citizens who had done nothing worse than oppose the traitors. In the end the latter escaped the just punishment of their crimes, the French, on the demand of the ring-leaders, insisting at the London Conference on the Germans granting a full amnesty to all Separatists.

No reciprocal amnesty was granted by the French, however. In batches the German political prisoners were released, in batches only were the unhappy 140,000 deportees slowly allowed to

return if no objection thereto could be devised to inflict further punishment on them. There was no general withdrawal from the Ruhr, no immediate restoration of the State railways, no immediate withdrawal of the local Rhenish currency in the form of "Régie Francs" which the French had issued, and no general abolition of the "*Micum*" (*Mission Interallié de Contrôle des Usines et Mines*) which had tried to subjugate the industry of the Ruhr to the *Comité des Forges*. Step by step Germany had to fight and bargain for the restoration of what the French and Belgians had—as international jurists agreed—illegally seized. But no agreements, of course, could operate to stifle the outbursts of popular indignation against the traitors and tormentors of the population when the evacuation in June, 1930, deprived the Separatists who were foolish enough to remain of French protection. The Rhinelanders took vengeance with the same brutality that I had seen the French and Belgians show in 1918 towards their fellow-countrymen suspected of relations with the vanished German army of occupation.

As January, 1925, the date when the First zone (which comprised the British and Belgian zone with a small section of the French zone) was due for evacuation under the Treaty of Versailles, approached, France tried to drive another hard bargain based on the right of might. Germany was suddenly told—on grounds little more serious than that famous "default" in reparations which had been used to justify the occupation of the Ruhr—that she had not complied with the

disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles and that therefore the five-year post-ratification period of occupation of this zone had not begun to run. She was offered, however, immediate evacuation if she would surrender part of her sovereignty on the Rhine and allow an Inter-Allied Commission certain permanent powers of control.

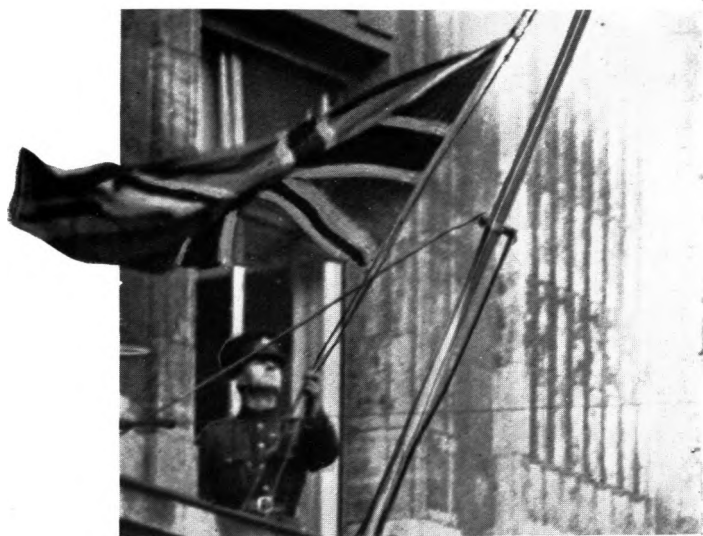
The Commission would soon have come to mean little more than a French Commission, of course. The plan—which in one form was for a time sponsored by Brigadier-General Spears in England, and called the "Spears Plan," was nothing more than a modified form of permanent occupation, and offered France the chance of continual mischief-making in Western Germany by reviving Separatism at a future date. Most wisely Germany declined to compromise in the matter of her sovereignty over the Rhine, saying in effect :

"Commit any illegality you will—ignore your own Treaty and stay on in the Rhineland. We are powerless to prevent you. But do not try to lead us into granting you one iota more right to interfere in German affairs than the Treaty secures you. If you do, you waste your time."

Evacuation of the First Zone was refused when the due date arrived, but the Germans, while complying with the few trifling demands made in the matter of disarmament, stood firm on the Rhineland question. The French ardently desired to encourage the growing feeling in the population of Rhineland that as the French, Treaty or no Treaty, would never leave the Rhine, it might be better after all to do something to appease their annexationist

clamouring in the name of "security." But public opinion in Great Britain against the extravagant and perilous occupation was growing, and in January, 1926, the Union Jack was hauled down from the Excelsior Hotel, Cologne, which I had helped to select as British General Headquarters in December, 1918, and the First Zone evacuated. Military occupation, however honestly the "occupiers" may strive to be just to the "occupied," remains always an unpleasant business, and the comparative popularity of the British did not prevent enthusiastic celebrations in Cologne on their departure. The British Head-quarters was moved to Wiesbaden, to the delight of the local population, which had suffered greatly under the Franco-Separatist *régime*. After four uneventful years, during which the British public forgot its existence, the last remnant of the British Army of the Rhine left for home at the end of 1929, leaving the Rhineland for another six months to the French and Belgians alone.

I have re-visited the Rhineland three times since the days when it was really "in the news"—once in June, 1925, to find it more or less dominated by the extreme German Nationalists, who had seized upon the Rhineland "Millenary" Celebrations to stir up national passions. I am afraid it wounded many stout German hearts to find that my messages showed on this occasion no greater tenderness towards German than they had done towards French chauvinism. The Berlin Centre newspaper, *Germania*, which had often sung my praises during the Ruhr struggle, now commented



(Photo Mattaus, Cologne)

*Hauling down the flag at British Head-quarters in Cologne  
on the evacuation*



(Photo Nelles und Wolfram, Cologne)

*Cologne celebrates freedom the crowd in the cathedral  
square outside British Head-quarters after the  
troops had left*

"THE CAPTAINS . . . DEPART!"

mournfully that for years *The Times* had been represented in Rhineland by a correspondent famous for his "objective" attitude. Judge, then, of *Germania's* surprise and grief on opening *The Times* recently to find an article from which all objectivity was lacking, the very soul of which was unfriendly to Germany! It is the lot of the foreign correspondent—as was to be brought home to me immediately in my new sphere of activity on the Danube—to be considered "objective" only so long as his messages can be quoted in support of the policy of the commentator.

My second return visit, in January, 1927, was to report the Rouzier trial. No better example of the attitude of the French in the Palatinate even so long after the Separatist epoch and of the brutality inherent in any foreign military occupation could be wished for than this classic example of *La Justice Militaire*. I sat in the courtroom at Landau awaiting the opening of the trial by French court martial of Sous-Lieutenant Pierre Rouzier. On various occasions three Germans had received slashes across the face from his riding-whip. On the night before he was to be demobilized Rouzier had "celebrated" the event. As a result, one German had received a bullet in the skull and lay, a semi-idiot, in hospital. Another had received one of Rouzier's bullets in his heart and lay in Germersheim cemetery. Yet when the *huissier* cried, "Bring in the accused!" it was not Rouzier, but three Germans (including the one who had been slashed across the face and shot through the jaw by Rouzier) who were marched in

and charged with having adopted an *attitude insultante*. Only on the command, "Let M. le Sous-Lieutenant Rouzier also enter," did the hero of these incidents—"the knight of the riding-whip," as the Germans called him—appear—a bull-necked youth dressed in full regimentals and white gloves, who took a chair near the German prisoners. The verdict, despite the proof in evidence of the facts cited above, declared Rouzier to be "not guilty." But the court awarded a nominal two years' imprisonment to the semi-idiot German whose brain still protruded through his skull for his *attitude insultante*. No sentence, however, was passed even *in contumaciam* on the German whose insulting heart had ventured to stop the bullet of the young French officer's revolver.

A year later I went back to Rhineland for the last time—on behalf of the *Daily Express*, in search of "Britain's Lost Legion" on the Rhine, and "discovered" them in Wiesbaden. Unfortunately, the discovery caused annoyance to some of the backwoodsmen with excellent jobs dependent on the continuance of the occupation. Subsequently a writer in the Army newspaper, *Cologne Post and Wiesbaden Times*, solemnly demolished my playful story of how I had laboriously tracked down our forgotten Army of Occupation, and forced me to bow my head in shame by proving incontrovertibly that I had known all the time that it was stationed at Wiesbaden.

The fate of the Rhineland remained in doubt up till 30th June, 1930, when the French followed the British and Belgians across the frontier, restoring



(Photo Talla, Trier)

*Coloured cavalry (Spahis) arrive at Trier, 1918*



(Photo Ephens Film, Cologne)

*June 30th, 1930 : the French evacuate Speyer (coloured orderlies manacled)*

UNDER COLOURED TROOPS



to Germany the province to which she had clung so obstinately throughout the period of preparation, in the terrible days of the "Revolver Republic," and in the following years when the wisdom of such statesmen as Briand and Stresemann sought to find a solution of the perils of the Rhine occupation. Even in March, 1930, a member of the German Cabinet whom I had asked certain questions concerning the secret German plans for resistance in 1923-24 refused to answer, saying:

"When the last French soldier has crossed the frontier I can answer you—not before. Until that happens we can never be sure that Rhineland will not again be in danger of a revival of French Separatist schemes." Thus it was not until evacuation had been completed that it was possible to tell the story of the Revolver Republic without leaving the end open to doubt.

In August, 1924, I went as "holiday relief" to the Paris office of *The Times* for a month. Here, after the heat of the battle was over, I learned for the first time something of the feeling, both "pro" and "anti," which had been aroused by my dispatches to that newspaper on the occupation of the Ruhr and French Rhine policy.

"I am delighted to meet you," the Comte de Chambrun, then head of the Press section of the Quai d'Orsay, greeted me, "and to make the acquaintance of the man who has been more troublesome to France than any other single individual during the past eight en months."

"I thank you, M. le Comte," I told him, "for the compliment, for to anyone who has entertained

such feelings of affection in the past for your country as I have done it is the highest compliment to be told that he has been an obstacle blocking the way she was treading in Rhineland until M. Herriot took office a few weeks ago."

"Do you know your messages divided *The Times* into two camps?" I was asked by a person whose family had been in authority in Printing House Square for a very long time. "One party was for your instant dismissal because of the way in which you kept hammering away at the 'French Allies.' The other party said: 'Let the French first trip him up for inaccuracy if they can; if not, the "copy" is good enough!' They failed to trip you up and so you established a record in 'leading the paper' for a longer consecutive period than any other single-handed correspondent."

"Day after day," one of the Paris correspondents of *The Times* told me, "the Quai d'Orsay demanded your removal, and day after day we said:

"'Give us a specific instance where he has been wrong or biased, and we will forward your complaint to London office.' But no such instance was furnished."

"Yours is the doubtful honour," Lord Bradbury told me one day at a luncheon party, "of having had your detested name coupled with those of Lord d'Abernon and myself in this capital."

In Paris I heard first of the attacks on me which had been appearing in the *Echo de Paris*, the *Matin*, *La Nation Belge*, and many other

papers, and learned details of the mysterious ways in which the Wilhelmstrasse had managed to get me under its thumb. Mr. Geoffrey Dawson, the Editor of *The Times*, laughingly told me later in London that he could have papered a room with the reams of letters denouncing me as "pro-German" and as a "traitor to the Entente," which had rained in upon Printing House Square. It was news to me that such excitement had resulted from what seemed at the time nothing more than routine "covering" of "day to day" events in a historic episode which was, indeed, not without its thrills, but was often dull enough. After getting away from the trees to Paris, however, it was interesting to see the wood in perspective.

When I left the service of *The Times* eighteen months later the *Manchester Guardian* published a kindly little paragraph in its "London Correspondence," which I cannot forbear quoting even at the risk of a charge of vanity.

"The news that Mr. G. E. R. Gedye, the Central European correspondent of *The Times*, is leaving that newspaper," the *Manchester Guardian* wrote, "will appeal to a larger world. For Mr. Gedye was *The Times* special correspondent in the Ruhr during the days of the Ruhr Occupation, and his brilliant and courageous dispatches of that time to his paper are certainly not forgotten. They were perhaps the first outward and unmistakable sign to the uninitiated that Printing House Square had finally escaped from the Northcliffe influence.

"Appearing of all papers in *The Times*, they

had naturally an immense influence, and it is little exaggeration to credit this journalist with quite a large share in the defeat of M. Poincaré's grandiose and imperialist plan."

It was pleasant to find the *Manchester Guardian* and the Quai d'Orsay in agreement that my work had contributed in some measure, however slight, to cause the disappointment of those French aspirations to German territory which, had they been successful, must inevitably have led to a repetition of the horrors of 1914-18. Few of my one-time comrades of arms in my place, I think, would have concerned themselves greatly at the cry of "pro-German" (such as was naturally raised against me) if at the same time they were credited with some share in having confounded French ambitions on the Rhine by the simple means of reporting daily the bare facts concerning France's real aim and methods. The future will yet show whether the pro-French enthusiasts who by their unwavering support of their protégé in her most perilous courses so weakened and discredited new-born democracy and pacifism in Germany, really did so great a service to the country of their affections. Has France added much to that "security" in the name of which so much violence was done, by causing a desperate nation to raise an obscure fanatic like Adolf Hitler to the threshold of a Fascist dictatorship under the device of "Force to meet Force"?

Paris in that summer of 1924 restored to me another France than the one I had sorrowfully learned to distrust on the Rhine—the France of

thrifty, cautious, simple folk, disillusioned of "Napoleonic dreams," sobered by adversity in grandiose adventures, and anxious to forget in resuming the daily round its one-time chauvinist mis-leaders.

At the *Gare du Nord* I stood amongst a vast crowd gathered to welcome back the head of the French Government, not from the conquest of Rhine and Ruhr, or from the "victory" of a dictated peace like the unhappy and merciless Treaty of Versailles. M. Edouard Herriot came back from the London Conference, not as a victor, but as a successful negotiator of the first of those amending instruments which have been devised—and will have to be devised—to repair the evils inherent in the Versailles documents. It was my business only to observe and report, yet with the picture of 1923-24 on the Rhine in my mind, it was hard to refrain from joining in the wild shouts of "*Vive Herriot! Vive Herriot!*" with which a Paris restored to sanity greeted the messenger of peace.

